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AN INTRODUCTION
TO THE
DEVOTIONAL STUDY
OF THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES.

BY
EDWARD MEYRICK GOULBURN, D. D.,
AUTHOR OF "THOUGHTS ON PERSONAL RELIGION."

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PREFACE

TO THE SIXTH EDITION.

THESE pages contain the substance of some Sermons on the Devotional Study of Holy Scripture, which were formerly delivered to my young congregation in the Chapel of Rugby School. My connexion with the School has long since ceased ; and it would be easy to obliterate from the work all trace of the circumstances under which it was originally composed. But I prefer leaving those traces, if it were only for “Auld lang syne ;” and, as the main argument has in it nothing of a local character, and is quite as much adapted to Adults as to Youth, I trust the general reader will excuse my doing so.

I wish this little Treatise to be regarded as part of a larger Work (“THOUGHTS ON PERSONAL

RELIGION "'), which has been more recently published, in which I have attempted to give some suggestions for the performance of Religious Exercises in general. Among these the Study of the Holy Scriptures does not find place, because I have felt it to be of such transcendent importance as to require a separate treatise. In proportion to the richness of the fruits which may be gathered from this study, are the difficulties which devout Christians find in the pursuit of it. That this book may be the means, under God's Grace, of helping some souls over those difficulties, is the prayer with which I send forth this Sixth Edition.

E. M. G.

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CHAPTER I.

THE POSITION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES IN THE SCHEME OF THE MEANS OF GRACE.

"Abide in me, and I in you."—JOHN xv. 4.

Need of a treatise giving hints for the devotional study of Holy Scripture—Distinction between such a treatise and a practical Commentary—Difficulty of reading the Scriptures so as to derive edification from them—Subject of the Chapter proposed—Union with God (the end of all Ordinances) cemented by Baptism, and maintained by the Lord's Supper—It involves the access of man to God (Prayer and Praise), and that of God to man (the Word spoken or written)—The objection, Why is not more said in the Bible about the Bible? considered and answered—The Preaching of the New Testament and Modern Preaching not coextensive—Conclusion.

Of all the means of Grace, the devotional study of Holy Scripture has perhaps received less illustration by means of formal treatises, than any other. Manuals of private prayer, of family prayer,—treatises on Prayer, containing valuable aids for the right performance of this duty, and supplying forms (or at least outlines) for the busy, and those who, for want of practice, cannot easily collect their thoughts,—exist in abundance. Of

manuals too for the Holy Communion, containing helps for Self-Examination, and for previous, concurrent, and subsequent meditation, there is no lack. The reading of Holy Scripture alone has been treated in a cursory and meagre manner, as if the profitable use of this means of Grace were a matter so perfectly simple and obvious, as to require no introductory considerations, and no subsidiary aids whatever. I do not mean that we have no Commentaries on Scripture: of these there exists a large profusion, both critical and practical: but the critical Commentary (though highly valuable in its own line) is not designed for devotional reading, and the practical Commentary virtually supersedes the operation of the mind, by thinking for us,—by offering us that food in a digested form, which, in a sound and healthy state, we ought to digest for ourselves. What seems to be needed is, not so much good reflections on particular passages, as a series of elementary considerations, which may facilitate the making of those reflections for ourselves.

For I think that no one, who has sufficient spirituality of mind to be aware of the vast difference between the formal looking through a Chapter and the deriving from it moral light and strength, and who has made an honest endeavour after these ends in his daily reading, will assert that he has found it easy to secure them. Perhaps, if people spoke out the whole truth, they would say that

there is no religious exercise, from which they derive so little sensible edification as from this. No earnest person will allow himself to pray mechanically, or to receive the Holy Communion mechanically; but there are parts of the Holy Scripture (especially its narrative and predictive parts) which it is really very hard to read, with any thing beyond attention,—which it is very hard to realize as the Voice of God communicating instruction to His People. Familiarity with the letter of the English Translation increases the difficulty. In some parts, the collocation of every sentence, and of every word in every sentence, is known to us beforehand. This deadens the impression with which haply the Truth might be received, if it now made its entrance into the mind for the first time, or if, at least, it was clothed in a new form of language, or enforced by a fresh illustration.

The present Chapter shall be devoted to the consideration of that which lies at the foundation of the whole subject—THE POSITION OF THE STUDY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE IN THE SCHEME OF THE MEANS OF GRACE. The relations of our subject to other portions of the vast field lying around it, will thus be better understood.

What is the great end and purpose of the Dispensation under which we live? It is to make men one with God—partakers of the Divine Nature. This is the great end. All means and

instruments find their fulfilment, all hopes and desires find their consummation, here. When the union of man with God, by our participation in the Divine Nature, is achieved, the object of the whole Scheme of Redemption is achieved. Christ descended from Heaven, and took our nature, and suffered in it, in order that through His Mediation,—through the instrumentality of His Passion and Grace,—we might be lifted up into a participation of the Divine Nature.

This of itself is a glorious thought—the designed oneness of us, sinful creatures of dust, with the Most High God. I must not, however, linger upon it, but pass on.

The Holy Sacraments represent, and where they are duly received, effectuate this union. Baptism, duly received, grafts into Christ; so that the worthy recipient of Baptism as really belongs to Christ, is as really a part of Christ thenceforward, as an ingrafted branch becomes, by ingrafting, part of the vine. The union once cemented must be continued. In Nature it is continued by a constant inflowing of the sap from the vinestock into the branch. In Grace it is continued by a constant inflowing of the Holy Spirit from CHRIST into the believer's soul. This constant influx of cementing Grace is ministered, in all cases where that Holy Sacrament can be had, through a penitent and faithful reception of the Lord's Supper; the Supper is the channel through

which the cementing Grace, the Grace which *keeps* the soul one with Christ, flows.

So we are told, distinctly and emphatically, in the beautiful preparatory Exhortation, which sets forth the design and significance of the Ordinance. "The benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that Holy Sacrament; for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood; then we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; WE ARE ONE WITH CHRIST, AND CHRIST WITH US." And if one with Christ, then one with God; for Christ Himself said, "I and My Father are One."

Moreover, what is the symbolism of the Lord's Supper? What truth does *it* teach? The outward part of the Ordinance consists in the reception of bodily food. That food, like all other food, is received, digested, and, in due time, is incorporated with, and undistinguishable from, the body. From having been food, it becomes part of the living frame.

This emblematizes our union with Christ, which it is the design of the Ordinance to effectuate, or rather to maintain. As the food is converted into the substance of the body, so Christ and the believing soul are, through the instrumentality of the Ordinance, where it is duly received, made one Spirit; the difference being, that, whereas the material food is assimilated to the body, the Spiritual Food assimilates the soul to Itself.

But now, how does all this bear upon the Study

of the Scriptures? Thus: Union with God in Christ wraps up every blessing. You cannot go beyond this. It is the *summum bonum*, containing all, and more than all, that heart can desire, or imagination can fathom. Does it contain the privilege of access to God—of pouring out our hearts to Him at all times, of casting our burden upon Him? No doubt the being united with God must *involve* this privilege; *but it goes beyond it*. Parties so united as to become *one*, must, as a matter of course, have the privilege of opening their hearts one to another; from this closeness of union, that privilege flows. Again, does union with God involve the privilege of hearing God's Voice, of receiving from Him messages of comfort, guidance, light, counsel? *It involves this also; but it goes beyond it*. If I am One Spirit with the Lord, it is absolutely certain,—it flows of necessity from this union,—that the Lord will address me ever and anon in accents of direction, warning, and consolation. What means a Spiritual Union, if it does not involve at least this?

Now we have said that the Holy Communion is that Ordinance, which maintains (when duly received) union between the soul and God. Therefore, as that union comprises every privilege, so this Sacrament must wrap up in itself* every other means of Grace, while it goes beyond every

* In order to give a more expanded view of this subject, a Sermon, preached by the Author on the Holy Communion, is subjoined in the Appendix. Note A.

other. And such is indeed the case. Prayer (in all its branches) is an element of the Holy Communion. Praise and thanksgiving are essential elements of the Holy Communion. Reading and preaching of God's Word are essential elements of the Holy Communion.

We shall find that our Service for the Holy Communion comprises all the above exercises of Devotion. It embraces Prayer in all its forms,—containing, as it does, confession of sins, supplications for Grace in the Collects, intercession for all men in the Prayer for the Church Militant. It embraces—nay, it takes its tone from—Praise and Thanksgiving, containing, as it does, the Seraphic Hymn, and the Gloria in Excelsis. It embraces the reading of God's Holy Word in the Epistle and Gospel, and the preaching or exposition of the same in the Sermon, which in theory, and according to the Rubric, forms part of the Communion Office. And it was on account of this all-comprehensive character of the Communion Office, that it was formerly called *the Liturgy*, there being in fact no branch of Public Worship which was not based upon it and contained in it. We are accustomed to attach the name of Liturgy to the whole Prayer Book, that is, to all the Offices of the Church. The Primitive Christians confined the term to that single Office, of which they regarded all others as only imperfect fragments. Morning and Evening Prayer, Intercession, and

Giving of Thanks, were in their view separate pencils of light, derived from, and finding their combination in, the supreme Means of Grace—the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

We see, then, the position which the Reading of Holy Scripture occupies in the Scheme of the Means of Grace, and can now take a correct view of its bearing and relation to all other means. Union with Christ, or with God through Christ, is the end of all means. This union is cemented by Baptism, maintained by the Lord's Supper. Out of this union necessarily flow, upon this union are based, in this union are comprised and involved, two chief privileges,—the access of the soul to God in Christ (this is Prayer and Praise), and the Message of God to the soul (this is the Reading or Hearing of the Word). You have only to remember this simple thought, that if two persons are united in the closest conceivable intercourse, they cannot but address one another; so that if God and man are united, it necessarily flows from this union, that God will address man, and man will address God. The address of man to God is prayer, in the wide acceptation of that term. The address of God to man is through the Holy Scripture, either studied privately, or preached publicly.

It should be remembered that we are here speaking only of *Means of Grace, or Established Ordinances*. And what we say is that *the Estab-*

lished Ordinance through which God addresses man is the Holy Scripture. It is not denied or questioned that God may address the soul by His Spirit, without the intervention of this or any other Ordinance; or that He may by providential answers to Prayer speak to the human spirit. These things, however, do not come within the sphere of *Institution*, to which alone our present remarks are confined.

In conclusion we will notice a thought which may arise in some minds on the subject of the duty, for the performance of which it is the design of this little work to furnish helps.

Why, it may be asked, do we give such a prominence to the Study of Holy Scripture? The Bible itself does not seem to tell us that the reading of it is so vitally important as religious people make it out to be. The texts upon which the duty is rested, seem to reduce themselves to two or three. For example: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* Again, the Bereans are praised for searching the Scriptures daily, and applying them as a test to the preaching of the Apostle: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they

* Tim. iii. 16, 17.

received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”* And again, it is said by our Lord Himself, “Search the Scriptures;” † but the words admit of being rendered “ye search,” and it may be much doubted whether this rendering does not suit the context better.

As we may unfortunately now-a-days come across such foolish objections as these, to a practice which is essential to vital godliness, it is necessary that we should be furnished beforehand with the answer.

I will put aside the argument from common sense (which yet is very strong), that if God causes His Counsel of Salvation to be put upon record by the miraculous process of Inspiration, it must be with the intention that His People should study it. I will put aside the argument, drawn from the above text in the Second Epistle to Timothy, where we are told that the Scriptures are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,—and if profitable for these ends, then surely meant to be studied, by way of securing them.

Independently of these arguments, I boldly assert that the Epistles of the New Testament are full of the duty of studying the Scriptures. Though I am free to admit that these *words* are

* Acts xvii. 11.

† John v. 39.

not found there, yet I assert that the Apostle Paul is continually harping by implication upon the duty in question. For I suppose that it will be allowed on all hands, that he dwells on scarcely any topic so much, as on the blessed effects, and the necessity, of Preaching. Open an English Concordance at the word Preaching, or a Greek one at *κηρύσσω*, *κήρυγμα*, *εὐαγγελίζομαι*, and the abundance of references will fully bear out what I say. Now the question is, what did the Apostle mean by Preaching? Did he mean merely what we mean by it, and nothing more? What in modern times we mean by it, is a religious essay and exhortation, delivered after Divine Service by a Clergyman. No doubt the Apostle would embrace such exhortations in his definition, but would he embrace nothing beyond these? We must consider the time in which he wrote, and the circumstances of the persons whom he is addressing. There was then no printing, no power of multiplying books, and therefore no possibility for ordinary persons of possessing them. All the Scriptures of the New Testament did not even exist in manuscript, when St. Paul wrote. What means of instruction then, and of furtherance in Divine Knowledge, had the Church in those days? They had the Word, even as we have (and the Word is the essential part of preaching); but instead of having the Word in a Book, they had the Word from the lips. In-

spired men were sent abroad into all the world, to preach it with infallible correctness. There was then the gift of Prophecy—the gift, that is, of preaching, not as the fruit of private study, but by Inspiration.

Times and circumstances are now wholly altered. Men inspired unto infallibility no more exist. It is true that to Christian Ministers is transmitted now-a-days a commission to preach God's Word; but it is a Word which can be ascertained only by study. Candidates for the Priesthood are indeed exhorted to pray "for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost" (this is all-essential even now-a-days, but it is not an assistance of infallible Inspiration, such as would enable them to dispense with study; for the Bishop is instructed to add), "*that by daily reading and weighing of the Scriptures, ye may wax riper and stronger in your Ministry.*"*

What need any more of inspired men, when we have an inspired Book,†—a Book comprising the whole counsel of God, and keeping back nothing which is profitable to us? It is indeed important to remember (lest we should confound the form with the substance), that time was (and that the

* Ordination Service of Priests.

† The subsidence of the streams of Inspiration (at first diffused throughout the moral Universe) into the one vehicle of the Bible, is further illustrated in a Sermon which will be found in the Appendix. Note B.

time of the Church's greatest purity, when "she was white as snow in Salmon"), when the word of the New Testament existed without its letter. And the Word orally delivered by inspired men, was no less precious then than afterwards, when they had committed it to writing. But for us it exists only in the written form; the Scriptures enshrine the Word; and the Scriptures, therefore, cannot be over-valued.

The sum and substance of the argument is, that the word Preaching in the New Testament corresponds not merely to the set discourses of the Clergy in these days (though of course it includes these), but also to the reading of the Holy Scripture, and of such religious books as set forth Scriptural Truth. The great thought to be attached to the term Preaching, is the Word of God; whether that Word come through a book, or through the voice of a living man, is non-essential. Think, then, when you read the Scriptures, that the Word of God Himself falls upon your ears; reflect that you are performing a duty, which is an essential part of Communion with Him. Regard yourself as seeking an oracle for your direction in the very shrine of Heaven,—an oracle which cannot misguide deceive, or lie. Be assured that, since God had before Him when He inspired the Holy Scriptures, the knowledge of future events, and of all emergencies which should

14 *The Position of the Holy Scriptures, etc.*

arise to His People,* there is some utterance in that Holy Book, which is designed to meet the deepest needs of thy heart. And read it with all the reverence, simplicity, and awe, which this thought, if duly weighed, will inspire.

* “For it is an excellent observation which hath been made upon the answers of our Saviour CHRIST to many of the questions which were propounded to Him, how that they are impertinent to the state of the question demanded; the reason whereof is, because, not being like man, which knows man’s thoughts by his words, but knowing man’s thoughts immediately, He never answered their words, but their thoughts: much in the like manner it is with the Scriptures, which being written to the thoughts of men, and to the succession of all ages, *with a foresight of all heresies, contradictions, differing estates of the Church, yea, and particularly of the elect,* are not to be interpreted only according to the latitude of the proper sense of the place, and respectively towards that present occasion whereupon the words were uttered, or in precise congruity or contexture with the words before or after, or in contemplation of the principal scope of the place; but have in themselves, not only totally or collectively, but distributively in clauses and words, infinite springs and streams of doctrine to water the Church in every part.”—*Bacon’s Advancement of Learning.*

CHAPTER II.

OF ATTENTION AND THOUGHT, AND THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THEM.

"In his Law doth he meditate day and night."—PSALM i. 2.

Subject of the Chapter proposed—The Holy Scriptures the food of the mind—Analogy between Thought and Digestion—Thought and Attention confounded by many—Attention fills the memory with the points of a narrative—Thought raises questions upon it, and pursues them to an answer—Speculative Thought, and the difficulties which it proposes to solve, illustrated—Devotional or Practical Thought illustrated by a meditation upon Matt. xv. 21, &c.—Attention analogous to the reception of food—Portions of Scripture in the Church Service lengthened at the Reformation, and why—No time for Meditation in Divine Service—The Pause in the Ordering of Priests.

HAVING pointed out the position of the Holy Scriptures in the Scheme of the Means of Grace, I shall now endeavour to furnish some aids for making the study of them profitable.

My earlier remarks shall have reference to all Scripture generally. Afterwards we will divide the Sacred Volume into the different classes of writings which it contains, and consider what points of advice may be given, in reference to each class specifically.

The words from the Psalms which stand at the head of this Chapter, imply that, in order to profit by Holy Scripture, we should meditate in it, or, in other words, make it the subject of thought. What is meant by Thought,—how it goes beyond, and differs from, Attention,—we now propose to consider.

First, then, what is Thought? I will take an illustration of it from the Prayer Book. In the Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent we are taught to pray, that we may not only hear and read all Holy Scriptures, but also may mark, learn, and *inwardly digest* them. Inwardly I take to mean mentally, or, if you will, spiritually. *That we may mentally or spiritually digest them,—* this is the idea of which we are in search. To exercise thought upon the Scriptures, is to digest them mentally. What the faculty of digestion is to the body, the faculty of thought is to the mind or rational soul. Food is of no service to the body, unless the vital functions operate upon it (in the process which is termed digestion) and derive nourishment from it. Holy Scripture is of no service to the soul,—it can minister neither to our growth in grace, nor to our strength in resisting temptation, nor generally to moral health,—unless it be pondered, studied, meditated, thought of. Further, the actual nourishment of the body, is rather something extracted from food, than food itself; and the digestive process

is that by which this extraction is made, by which the food is converted (as we say) into nourishment. Even so the nourishment of the spiritual life is contained and wrapped up in Holy Scripture, and has to be drawn out for the service of the soul, by the operation of the mind upon what it hears or reads.

We have only to bear in mind the perfect unprofitableness of food to the body, if the body possessed no digestive power (that is, no power of assimilating the food to itself), and we have then a perfect image of the absolute necessity of Thought or Meditation, if we would profit by the reading of Holy Scripture.

And is not this by itself sufficient to condemn many of us? For are there not many, even of the well-disposed among us, who have hitherto contented ourselves with the mere daily perusal of a chapter, without making the smallest mental effort to draw forth, for our soul's service in common life, the instruction which that chapter is designed to convey?

This last observation leads me to the distinction between Attention and Thought; by drawing which distinction, I hope further to illustrate the nature of the latter process. Many persons conceive Attention and Thought to be something of the same kind; they have nothing but the vaguest and most ill-defined idea of any difference between them. There is, however, the widest

difference; and, as I believe the apprehension of this difference to lie at the root of the subject, I shall enter into it rather minutely.

There can be no Thought without previous Attention. But there may be close Attention to a subject without one grain of real Thought.

Attention to any book or discourse is that which serves, and which is necessary, to enable us to retain the various points of the book or discourse in our memory. Attention secures the remembering of these various points for a longer or shorter period of time, as the memory is more or less retentive. For example, we read in to-day's Gospel* the beautiful narrative of the Syrophenician's appeal to our Lord in behalf of

* The Lecture of which this Chapter contains the substance was preached on the Second Sunday in Lent. The Gospel for that Sunday is here given at length for convenience of reference:—

“Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou son of David! my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me! But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”—MATT. xv. 21–28.

her daughter. Attention exercised, while that story was read, would enable us to answer the following questions—Where was our Lord, when this event happened? (It is said by St. Matthew that He was in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.) Of what plague did the woman entreat our Lord to make her daughter whole? (It is said she was grievously vexed with a devil.) How did He at first receive her petition? (He answered her not a word.) How did the disciples beg Him to act? (They besought Him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us.)

Suppose some one to have read the narrative, or to have heard it read, in such a manner, that having afterwards been asked the above questions, he has been able to answer them all correctly. That person has exercised Attention; and this is well. But it is not a profiting by the Scriptures. It is only an essential process *preliminary to the profiting by them.* The knowledge of the points of the story, which is secured by Attention, is precisely the sort of knowledge with which we aim at filling the minds of children in our Sunday Schools. And I fear we are far too apt to plume ourselves on the large stock of this sort of knowledge, which a child of average intelligence will in a short time acquire. We forget that, except as an essential preliminary to a far deeper and more important process, the

knowledge of Scriptural facts is absolutely worth nothing.

Now, in the next place, let us consider what Thought is, as distinct from Attention.

A lower form of Thought, and one with which I am not at present engaged, might operate upon the difficulties of a narrative,—might raise questions of speculative interest, and seek their solution. Thus, if in reading the story, to which I just now referred, it were to strike any one that our Lord, at the period in question, is represented as being *out of the limits of Palestine* (in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon), and that at the same time there were other Scriptural considerations, leading us to believe that He never was literally out of those limits (the Lord being a Minister of the Circumcision, and the business of His ministry being not with the Gentiles, and so forth), and if he should seek the solution of this difficulty, by inquiring whether the words *coasts of Tyre and Sidon* might not (consistently with Scriptural usage) be interpreted loosely, borders of Tyre and Sidon (district immediately bordering on a Gentile country), this would be a form of Thought,—it would be something beyond, higher and better than mere Attention, and would of course display a larger amount of intelligence. To questions of the above kind, it is the design of *critical* Commentaries to supply

an answer. And the form of Thought in question may be called Speculative Thought.

Even this, however, is not *the* Thought which is requisite to secure our obtaining from the Holy Scriptures that nourishment which we need. This is not *the* Thought which converts them into aliment for the soul.

To this higher form of Thought I will assign the name Practical or Devotional, and distinguish it from the former, by saying that it brings into exercise, not the speculative faculty; not curiosity, in any form or shape; but those moral faculties, which the peasant has in common with the philosopher—the heart, the conscience, and the will.

Thought Practical (or Devotional) would raise, upon the narrative above referred to, questions such as these, and would pursue them to an answer. Why did our Lord, so full of tenderness and compassion, Who seems to have travelled into this far corner of Palestine for the sole purpose of giving this woman an opportunity of access to Him, meet her with perfect silence, in the first instance, and in the second, with the discouragement of rough and hard words? Answer: Why but because He designs to teach me, that if He does not immediately answer my prayers on the first application, it is not that He does not hear them; and also to draw me on, by apparent denial, to greater earnestness and

importunity in prayer; and to impress upon my heart this lesson of lessons, that even if, after earnest prayer, things seem to go wrong, and my wishes seem to be thwarted, He has still a heart of love towards me, beneath this disguise of stern severity :—

“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for his Grace ;
Behind a frowning Providence—”

(Why, I think it was indeed a frowning Providence, or something even more discouraging still, when this woman was accosted as a Gentile dog by the Saviour of the world, and it was implied that the mercies of the Most High were not for such as her)—

“Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.”

I know then what to think of that little cross the other day, which came to me when I was in the way of duty, and after I had earnestly and resolutely devoted myself to God’s Service. I fancied Providence was thwarting me, and that it was hard to be discouraged, at the outset of a religious course, with rough dealing; but it was only the echo of those accents, which flowed from the lips of an Infinite Love—“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast it

to dogs." Then I see very plainly that this Scripture is for me no dead letter; that God, even the Most High, is speaking to me through it; that His Voice is falling upon the ear of my heart. And behold, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, I have hope. I close the Holy Book, fully resolved (by Divine Grace) to persevere; to pray oftener, and more earnestly, in answer to each repulse; and never to abandon the narrow path of duty, however many the discouragements it may present.

The person who each day makes this or a similar use of any passage of Holy Scripture, however short, has gained infinitely more, and done infinitely better, than he who has read, with nothing beyond Attention, four or five long chapters.

Briefly: the fundamental question which Devotional Thought raises upon any passage of Holy Scripture, is—What spiritual lesson, whether of reproof, consolation, correction, or instruction, may I gather from this passage? Will it furnish me with arms against temptation? or with comfort under trouble? or with encouragement under depression? or with clearer instruction in the path of duty? in short, what bearing has it on my present spiritual state?

Having thus explained the difference between Thought and Attention, I will now recur again, by way of further illustrating this important dis-

tinction, to the image proposed at the outset of the Chapter. It was said that Thought bore the same relation to the spirit of man, as the digestive process bears to his body. It is Thought which digests the Scripture, converts it into spiritual nourishment, and makes it serviceable for the pilgrimage and warfare of Life. To what bodily process is Attention analogous? To that of *receiving* the food. Of course, food cannot be digested, where it has not been first received. But where the digestive faculty is deranged, it might haply be received, without being digested. In the same way Holy Scripture cannot be meditated upon, except it be first attentively perused. But it may be, and often is, attentively perused, without being meditated upon, without being allowed to stir in the heart one single question of personal and practical interest.

Our Reformers knew well the distinction between Attention and Thought, and they have shown their appreciation of it by certain arrangements of the English Ritual, which, in concluding this branch of the subject, I think it well to point out. Every one who has been at the pains of comparing the portions of Scripture appointed for the Public Service of the Church—the Epistles and Gospels, for instance—before the Reformation, with those prescribed by the new Protestant Order, will perceive that our Reformers have proceeded on the principle of lengthening the

passages. The Epistles and Gospels, as they stand now, are short passages, but they were shorter still before the Reformation. In the Romish Service Books at present, you will find the constant insertion of short versicles of Scripture, but no long tract of it: nothing corresponding in length to our Lessons.

Now, why did our Reformers act upon this principle? They had a reason for this, as for all the arrangements which they made.

The insertion of very short passages of Scripture might be very useful, if there were in Divine Service any time to meditate. But if not, then the probability is, that the passage will just be read over as a form, and fail to make any impression whatever on the mind. But the fact is, that there *is* no time in the Public Service to do any thing beyond attending to the matter in hand, whether it be prayer, praise, reading, or preaching; unless, indeed, the mind was to be engaged in weighing what we had heard, while some other exercise of Devotion was going on, which would frustrate the design of a systematic and consecutive Liturgy. Meditation is, in the nature of things, for the closet, not for the Church. There you can take as small a portion of Holy Scripture as you please, and make it the subject of Prayer, Meditation, and Spiritual Edification. Attention is for the Church; and there accordingly we read passages of fair length, sitting some time under

the reader, while the mind travels rapidly over a considerable tract of a Scripture, and takes in, by mere attention, its several points.

Some perhaps may think, that it would have been well, had it been prescribed that in each Service a period of silence should be left for meditation. I think it cannot be denied that such a period would have a solemn, and sometimes a profitable, effect. At the same time it must be remembered, that an arrangement of this kind is not so well suited to the character of the English people (essentially busy, active, and unmeditative), as it might be to that of other nations. And the denying such a period of silence to us on common occasions, makes it more striking on that awful occasion when it does occur—the Ordination of Priests. In that most solemn of all solemn Services, immediately before the Hymn, calling down the Holy Ghost upon Candidates for the Order of Priesthood, it is ordered that the Congregation shall be desired secretly in their Prayers to make their humble supplications to God for all these things, for the which Prayers *there shall be silence kept for a space.* The death-like stillness which reigns in the Cathedral during that pause, and which is at length terminated by the Bishop's invocation of the Holy Ghost in that most sublime of all metrical Hymns, “Come, HOLY GHOST, OUR SOULS INSPIRE,”—is a period in a man's life, which no subsequent impressions can efface.

Our subject in this Chapter shall be as follows:

THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF HOLY SCRIPTURE
EVINCES THE NECESSITY OF MEDITATION, FOR THOSE
WHO DESIRE TO USE IT ARIGHT.

We must necessarily be at fault as to how we may profit by Scripture, unless we first obtain clear and distinct notions as to what is the general character of the Volume, and what we may expect to find in it. And when I speak of its general character, I mean its character as a practical book,—a book designed for the guidance of human life, under every aspect of that guidance,—designed “for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness”—in short, for the furniture of the house of God unto all good works.

There is a very close and striking analogy between God's Word and His works. Both proceed from the same Author; and we should therefore expect to find that both would be framed upon the same principles. By way of showing how it is so, let me now call your attention to the matter in hand, the passage of Scripture which stands at the head of this Chapter, “Wells of Salvation,”—this is an expression, which may be very appropriately applied, in a figurative sense, to denote the Holy Scriptures. “They are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” And they are *wells*—in their freshness, in their inexhaustibility, and in their power of refreshing the soul.

CHAPTER III.

THE NECESSITY OF MEDITATION EVINCED BY THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."—ISAIAH xii. 3.

Subject of the Chapter proposed—Analogy between God's works and His Word—Resources exist in a crude state in Nature—have to be developed, and applied to the relief of man's condition, by Art and Industry—Exertion of Thought upon Scripture required, because Scripture is a Book, 1. of Principles rather than Rules—the difference between Principles and Rules exemplified—the absence of certain rules accounted for—2. of Examples rather than Precepts—The Sacred Writers do not comment upon their narratives—The absence of a moral to certain narratives accounted for—3. The character of Scripture is unsystematic—analogy of Nature—the bane and antidote not always found together—no method or arrangement in the stars—difference between admiring Scripture and profiting by it. Points for meditation in reading Holy Scripture—1. Draw morals from examples—2. Extract principles from rules—3. Frame rules from principles—the necessity of rules for the satisfactory performance of divers duties—The sweetness and freshness of Holy Scripture to him who reflects on it for himself.

It is expedient to communicate unity to these Essays, by stringing the several thoughts in each of them upon the thread of a distinct idea.

Our subject in this Chapter shall be as follows:
THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF HOLY SCRIPTURE
EVINCES THE NECESSITY OF MEDITATION, FOR THOSE
WHO DESIRE TO USE IT ARIGHT.

We must necessarily be at fault as to how we may profit by Scripture, unless we first obtain clear and distinct notions as to what is the general character of the Volume, and what we may expect to find in it. And when I speak of its general character, I mean its character as a practical book,—a book designed for the guidance of human life, under every aspect of that guidance,—designed “for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness”—in short, for the furniture of the man of God unto all good works.

There is a very close and striking analogy between God’s Word and His works. Both proceed from the same Author; and we should therefore expect *a priori* that both would be framed upon the same principles. By way of showing how it is so, let me accommodate to the matter in hand the passage of Scripture which stands at the head of this Chapter. “Wells of Salvation,”—this is an expression, which may be very appropriately applied, in a figurative sense, to denote the Holy Scriptures. “They are able to make us wise *unto salvation* through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” And they are *wells*—in their freshness, in their inexhaustibility, and in their power of refreshing the soul.

Now observe what a well is. A well is not a cistern or an artificial reservoir; a well is not an aqueduct. These things are the production of human skill, the result of the wise application of human resources. A well, on the other hand, is Nature's work,—it is an underground fountain, from which, and by means of which, cisterns, reservoirs, and aqueducts are filled. You have to dig for it, and when you have found it, you have to make an enclosure round it with brickwork. And thus it is generally. Art accommodates and applies to the service of man, what Nature, and Nature only, furnishes. Magnificent timber is scattered over the whole face of Nature, but we do not find houses or ships ready built; we are left to fell the timber for ourselves, to arrange and construct it for all the services of human life. Bright flowers and fragrant herbs diversify our fields during the warmer parts of the year; ripe and ruddy fruits weigh down the branches of our fruit trees, or hang in clusters on our garden walls; but the healing medicine, or the refreshing beverage, we must distil for ourselves,—it is not made ready to our hands. There are mines too, deep and of vast extent, running along under the surface of the earth; but to work them, and extract their productions, and thus furnish life with necessaries or luxuries,—to apply the coal to the warming of our apartments, the salt to the seasoning of our food, or the gold to the trans-

actions of commerce,—this is not done by Nature,—it is not Nature's part to do it,—it is the part of human industry, and human skill.

Now you are to think of Holy Scripture as a vast tract of rich territory, having its forests, its wells, its flowers, its herbs, its fruits, its mines; but awaiting the hand of the woodman, the digger, the cultivator, the distiller, the miner. The territory contains all resources, but the resources require to be developed by human activity. It has streams of refreshment for the wayfarer to Heaven, for the wayfarer against sin; waters of comfort, along whose pleasant margin the Lord leads the souls of His sorrowing people. It exhibits everywhere the Wood of the Blessed and Precious Cross, wherewith we may construct for ourselves a shelter against the tempest of Divine wrath,—an ark of refuge against the deluge, wherewith that wrath will one day desolate the world of the ungodly. Scripture has its different leaves and herbs of wondrous virtue, adapted to every form of spiritual disease. It has its jewels of great price,—they are called “exceeding great and precious promises,”—laid up in store for those who will search for them, and capable of dignifying and ennobling human existence. But these, and other spiritual treasures and resources, contained in Holy Scripture, it requires pains and diligence to come at, appropriate, and apply.

I shall give some instances of the necessity for

labour, thus laid upon those who desire to profit by the spiritual resources which God's Word furnishes to them.

1. It has often been said, but can never be said too often, that the Scripture is rather a Book of principles than of rules. Let us clearly understand the difference. A rule of duty sets us a definite task, a task which wears one and the same aspect under all circumstances, whose limits are prescribed, and whose nature there can be no mistaking. "Thou shalt set the shewbread upon the pure table before the Lord,"—this is a rule; it prescribes an action, clearly defined, and never varying in its form. A principle, on the other hand, prescribes, not an action, but a frame of spirit, a tone of mind, which will develope itself differently under different circumstances. "Honour thy father and thy mother," is a principle; the honour may be shown in many different ways, by outward marks of respect, by attention to their wishes, by praying for them, by giving them our services when they are in difficulty, by manfully refusing to be ashamed of them, if they move in a lower sphere of life than ourselves. Sir Thomas More acted upon the principle, when, being Lord High Chancellor of England, he knelt down as he passed the door of an inferior Court in Westminster Hall, and solicited, on bended knee, the blessing of his father, who sat as Judge in that Court. A schoolboy is adapting the same high

principle to his own circumstances, when, in some trifling matter, such as communicating frequently with home, or avoiding the first step towards certain habits, he carries out, at the cost of his own inclination, the decidedly expressed wishes of his parents.

Now, since the many rules of the Jewish Dispensation, so far as they were mere rules, have passed away, it is surprising how few rules, binding upon Christians, the Sacred Volume contains. Almost all the preceptive part of the Volume is devoted to the laying down of principles. And by way of impressing upon us more clearly this character, certain rules, which we should expect to find there, are purposely omitted. Thus, we might have expected a rule, prescribing prayer a certain number of times every day. We find no such rule. We find only the broad principle, "Pray without ceasing." We might have expected rules forbidding slavery, and forbidding suicide. We find none. But in their place we have the broad principles given to us, on which such sins must be perfectly odious in the sight of God. We have the strongest assurances of God's hatred of oppression, of the duty of submission to His will, and of the importance of the span of time allotted to us here below; and from these principles of duty, those rules are easily evolved. It requires however reflection to evolve them,—an application of the mind to the principles, with the view of developing the rules.

2. Again: the Bible is a book rather of examples, than of precepts. There is comparatively little teaching of moral lessons in the abstract. We are designed to gather such lessons for ourselves from the narratives.

Take the preceptive parts of both Testaments, and weigh them against the narrative parts; and how greatly will you find the latter to preponderate. What is this arrangement, but an indication on the part of God that He wills us to meditate upon His Word, and to derive from it for ourselves the lessons implicitly wrapped up in it, without their being always explicitly stated? The narrative itself seldom or ever develops those lessons; no comments are made, as a general rule, upon the conduct of the characters which are brought before us; we are left to gather the moral for ourselves, either from the results of the conduct, or from principles laid down in another, and possibly a remote, part of the Sacred Volume. Nay, where we should most expect to find some note of approbation or disapprobation affixed to the narrative; where the not having such a note even proves a stumbling-block to shallow and unreflecting minds; even there it is absent, by way of exhibiting to us more vividly the character of the Scripture, and the necessity for thought imposed upon him who would read to edification. Thus, God's abhorrence of Jacob's deceit and falsehood is not stated expressly in the narrative,

but left to be gathered from the after fortunes of the Patriarch, whose latter years only were gilded with some gleam of comfort,—who may be said to have paid a life-long penalty of his sin. And in recording the end of Judas, where profane writers would scarcely have omitted some comment on the guilt of suicide, and the steps which led to it, the mind of the reader is left to elicit for itself the lessons of that fearful fall, the awful risk of sinning against high privilege, the hardening of heart involved in frequent violations of conscience, and the mastery which Satan gains over the will at great junctures, by surrenders of it into his hands on ordinary occasions. All these lessons it asks some mental effort to elicit. It is however an effort which repays itself. It is far more interesting—it gives far more of life and freshness to a maxim of duty—to derive it for ourselves from an example, than to have it presented to us in a dry and abstract form. Teaching by example is far more lively in the nature of things, than if the precept were delivered without illustration, and ready for immediate use.

3. Again; Holy Scripture is essentially an un-systematic Book; nothing like order or arrangement is attempted in it. The classification, adjustment, accommodation, systematization of its doctrines and precepts, the methodizing of them into creeds or codes of duty, is not even aimed at. The precept and the doctrine are thrown out

just as the occasion for them offers; the sacred writer does not stop to guard or counterbalance them; if they need counterbalancing, the equilibrium doctrine or the equilibrium precept is to be found in another Inspired Writing, which originated in a wholly different occasion. Even so in the wide field of Nature, we do not find a noxious herb growing side by side with its antidote; but noxious herbs (these being only noxious in certain applications—having their uses and services in the general system) are found in one locality; in another district, whose features are different, springs up the medicinal plant. Man is left to discover and apply the counteracting power.

This unsystematic character of Holy Scripture may be illustrated, not only by the promiscuous profusion with which the gifts of Nature are lavished over the earth, but also by the midnight heavens. In the firmamental works of God, as well as in those which diversify the surface of this planet, we find an analogy to the manifold and marvellous resources of His Word. The nineteenth Psalm treats of both these together: first of the firmament ("The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament showeth His handiwork,") and then of the Law of God ("The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul," &c.). There must be some analogy between the two things, to justify this juxtaposition. What

is it? Many points might be given. One of them (it may seem recondite at first, but I believe it will not appear so on further examination) is the unsystematic manner in which the heavenly bodies and the jewels of God's Holy Word are thrown about, the one over the surface of the midnight sky, the other over the page of Scripture. Fantastic shapes have been imagined, in which the stars group themselves into constellations; but these are the mere offspring of human fancy; there is really no order or system in them. Infinitely grander are those heavenly bodies thus, than if they were methodically grouped in regular mathematical diagrams. They constitute the shining drapery of the Throne of God, whose folds fall upon His footstool, the Earth, without any precise method of arrangement.

And now to turn to the practical conclusions from what has been said.

The general character of Holy Scripture evinces the necessity of thought and meditation, if we would use it aright; and also shows that such right use of it *must involve effort and exertion*. Without mental exertion a man may ADMIRE Scripture, even as without bodily exertion he may ADMIRE Nature. But as, if he would *profit* by Nature's resources, he must exert himself actively, digging the well, and felling the timber, and building the house, and distilling from the herbs, and sinking the mine; so, if he would

profit by the resources of Inspiration, he must operate upon the crude material of Scripture, by thought, prayer, and self-application of the Word; he must apply himself to the task with that energy and perseverance, which he does not ordinarily deny, when his bodily wants have to be satisfied.

1. From the examples a moral must be drawn. Never read the Scripture narrative, without asking yourself what practical lessons are to be derived from it.

2. From the rule, where a rule is given, the reader must apply himself to gather the principle. What an interesting task (to state it at the lowest) would it be, to go through the rules of the Levitical Law (those rules which have passed away), and to consider what principles of eternal application lie at the root of them! St. Paul bases the duty of providing for the maintenance of the clergy on this rule, "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn."* It is clearly an eternal principle of equity, to remunerate fairly all who labour in our service, and the higher the services they render, the greater our obligations become. What principle of eternal obligation can be extracted from the rules which follow?

"Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together."†

* 1 Tim. v. 18. 1 Cor. ix. 9, 11. † Deut. xxii. 11.

“ When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof.” *

“ If a bird’s nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree, or on the ground, thou shalt not take the dam with the young, but thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.” †

I am not now going to answer these questions. I merely raise them as suggestions, by way of explaining how absolutely necessary reflection is, to the profiting by some parts of Scripture. I am not making a Commentary, but endeavouring to teach how Commentaries should be made by all for themselves.

3. Again: rules must be framed from principles; and this I the more willingly dwell upon, because I shall thus obviate a misapprehension of my meaning, which might, if carried out into practice, be attended with mischievous consequences.

I have said that the Scripture is not a Book of rules. Nor is it so. I have never denied the necessity of *having* rules for the conduct of the Christian life. Rather, I would distinctly say, that such rules must be framed for each man by himself, out of the principles furnished by Scripture. I believe that, as men are in general constituted, rules, specific, strict, and stringent,

* Deut. xxii. 8.

† Deut. xxii. 6, 7.

are absolutely necessary to progress in the spiritual life. We must have times for prayer, times for spiritual exercise, times for reading the Scriptures, varying according to our circumstances and our amount of leisure, and regulated by ourselves in the exercise of our private discretion ; but times we must have, in order to secure the duty being done at all. And in other duties, rules are of the most essential service ; I had almost said of absolute necessity. Almsgiving—can you fulfil this duty, without imposing upon yourself certain restrictions, the definite surrender of certain indulgences, the money saved by which may be devoted to the relief of God's poor ? I am sure, at all events, that this is the best method of securing the fulfilment of the duty, and I earnestly exhort you to adopt it. Fix upon some good object. Lay by a certain sum (the amount is immaterial, so long as the giving it is a decided self-denial) every week, or every day ; and at Easter* bring it with you to the Church, to be laid upon the Altar of God, with this devoted resolve in your hearts—"I will consecrate my gain unto the Lord : and my substance unto the Lord of the whole earth."† Oh ! if we all adopted this practice, the Offertory would not be such a form

* The Lecture, of which this Chapter contains the substance, was delivered on the Fourth Sunday in Lent.

† Micah iv. 13.

as it is at present, people just giving in such a manner as that, while they maintain respectability, they may not really feel the sacrifice.

Again, as to fasting. Nothing is to be done here without rules. The example of the holy men of old, and our Lord's assumption* that His disciples would fast, seem to have laid down the principle of fasting. Each must carry it out for himself, by specific rules framed for his own guidance, after prayer for the Holy Spirit, in as simple, unostentatious, and self-denying a manner as he can.

I cannot close the Chapter without adverting to one incidental lesson, which the image commented upon at the outset suggests.

He who has learned by practice, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to meditate upon the Holy Scriptures, will assuredly prefer them above every other book, however holy, however edifying. Of other books one may weary, of this never. Others we may exhaust,—we may fathom the thoughts^t that are in them,—but this is inexhaustible. All that other books have of good or edifying, consists in this, that they are thoughts upon the Scripture, illustrations, enforcements, expositions, all based upon the Book of Books. Great helps they are, and we should bless God for them; but he who has embarked upon the course

* Matt. vi. 16, "When ye fast," &c.

of Meditation, will, I believe, soon find that to think for himself is pleasanter, as well as more profitable, than to have another man to think for him. The waters of Nature are sweetest and purest at the fountain-head ; the enclosing them in cisterns and reservoirs, however eminently serviceable in many respects, gives them a flavour of human art, which they lack in their state of native freshness. So the Wells of Salvation, which the Scripture supplies, are most fresh and invigorating, when we dip our own pitcher into the fountain ; when the water is quaffed as it springs up, and has not first percolated through the channel of another human mind. Drinking it so, we are best enabled to realise the Promise—“ WITH JOY SHALL YE DRAW WATER OUT OF THE WELLS OF SALVATION.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE ANALOGY BETWEEN THE FIELD OF SCRIPTURE AND THE FIELD OF NATURE PURSUED.

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things
out of thy Law."—PSALM cxix. 18.

The Psalmist found wonders in the Pentateuch—greater wonders may be found in the Christian Scriptures—do we regard them as wondrous?—all wonders excite our curiosity—many interested in religious books, who feel no such interest in Scripture—Novelty necessary to excite curiosity—Familiarity with Nature blunts our perceptions of its beauty—there may be wonders above and beneath the landscape—the help furnished by inventions of art in desiring these wonders—The grand and pathetic districts of Scripture—its less interesting tracts—possibility of treasure lying hid beneath these tracts—an instance in point—necessity of research in order to discern the "wondrous things"—still greater necessity of Divine Illumination—Scripture to be studied both in large portions and minutely—interest *about* Religion differs from interest *in* it—let us resolve to live the inner life of Religion, and we shall be naturally attracted towards the Scriptures, meeting the needs of our hearts.

THE Psalmist who wrote these words was in entire ignorance of that, which in the eyes of us Christians is the most precious part of God's Law.

Whoever he may have been, he was certainly unacquainted with the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists. The Law of which he speaks was not the Law of the Sermon on the Mount, but the Law of the Ten Commandments. Christ had not been explicitly revealed to him ; the only sight which he enjoyed of the Saviour of the World was through the dark glass of type and prophecy. Put yourself for a moment into his position. You are familiar only with the older Scriptures, possibly with no more of them than is contained in the five Books of Moses. You live only under the twilight glimmering of God's Grace and Love, and the light is not sufficient to enable you to spell out the significance of many truths, which occur in the Sacred Books that you have. To speak figuratively, the smaller type of the Books of Moses distresses and baffles your eye for want of light ; you can only make out their larger and more prominent characters. Of all the great doctrines which form the foundation of Christian Faith, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, you know nothing explicitly ; you do but blindly grope after such truths, and discover in yourself a want of them to make you happy. Being now under this measure of Revelation, how, think you, would you feel towards Revelation ? The Psalmist felt that there were wondrous things in it. Would *you* feel the same ? *Do* you feel the same, now that the wondrous

things have multiplied a hundredfold, now that the Law of God has received an accession, which never could have been devised by human intelligence; which clears up all that went before; and which vindicates in a most illustrious manner the Power and the Wisdom and the Love of God?

May it not be feared that, so far from being minded in the same manner as the Psalmist, so far from praying that our eyes may be opened to behold wondrous things out of God's Law, the prevailing impression of many is that there are no wonders at all to be seen there?

Let us take a review of our tone of mind towards the Scriptures. If we believed them to contain wondrous things, they would excite our curiosity. You cannot believe any thing to be very marvellous, without feeling an interest in the investigation of it. Suppose that some one professed to have had a communication from another world, or a supernatural warning of something which should happen, and which did happen. Not long ago it was impiously pretended in this country, and it is still pretended in America, that the spirits of the dead can communicate with the inhabitants of this world through certain favoured persons as media. What was the effect upon the minds of the public of this false and wicked wonder? What has been uniformly the effect of the many wondrous things in the department of the supernatural, which are blazed abroad from time to time, and in which

those who are most sceptical in Religion seem to be most credulous? Uniformly they have excited the *curiosity* of the world. The professors of the wonderful art have had their rooms thronged, and have realised vast fortunes. Natural philosophers have looked into the subject, and have given explanations where they could do so. Acute observers have gone wonder-gazing, and have endeavoured to detect imposture. The matter, if of sufficient notoriety, has supplied heads otherwise empty with a great windfall in the way of resources for conversation, some maintaining stoutly the reality and truth of the wondrous thing, and others demurring until they shall at least have been satisfied by ocular evidence. Examination, inquiry, interest, and discussion—these things have surely and rapidly followed in the train of the wonder. Have you ever experienced a feeling at all similar in contemplating the Scriptures of God, the treasure-house of Wisdom, the repository of all life-giving truths, the one Revelation of what lay hid in the counsels of God before Time began, but which is now made manifest to all nations for the obedience of faith? Let us take the case of the best among us, and seriously ask of them the question, *how far their curiosity has ever been excited by the Holy Scriptures.* It is not that they have no curiosity about religious subjects at all; by no means; this is only the characteristic of the very thoughtless (perhaps only of the very young,

whose path has never yet been crossed by sorrow, suffering, and death); it is not that they have naturally no turn of mind for such arduous topics as the controversies and the questions of Theology, for many of them are more or less divines, if not by profession, yet by a lively interest in the subject. But, with all this interest about Religion, does there not often coexist a comparative indifference to the Scriptures themselves? In a periodical lying upon their table there is perhaps a new article upon some of those moot points in Divinity, which are often discussed, with so little real fruit and so much uncharitableness, Baptismal Regeneration, Apostolical Succession, the Real Presence in the Holy Supper, the Inspiration of Scripture, and the like; a clever man has said his say upon these subjects, and perhaps after all has left them, in point of real explanation, very much where he found them, or has even given an additional tangle to the already tangled web; but the say of the clever man shall be read nevertheless; nay, greedily devoured, earnestly studied. And all this time the Volume of the Scripture lies, I do not say unopened! it may be opened at the beginning and close of the day, and read punctually, a chapter at a time; nay, read with reverent attention as a religious duty; but where, I ask, is the curiosity in this reading? Where is the living interest at all similar to that with which the religious periodical is devoured? Have not

many of us found it hard to lay down the periodical, and to take up the Scripture ? If we have done it, we have felt that in doing so we have passed from a work in compliance with the bent of our mind, to one against the grain. And why should not the Scripture have an interest of its own, fully as absorbing (to say the least of it) as that of any other religious work, whose arguments, if they are worth any thing, are merely echoes of the Scripture ? The answer is, that the Scriptures are familiar to us, so very familiar, that, in many parts of them, when a sentence is begun in our hearing we can continue it up to its period. The religious magazine, on the other hand, has all the charm of novelty. And novelty is absolutely necessary to excite strong curiosity.

Now this last position may be frankly admitted. Novelty *is* necessary, according to the constitution of our mind, to excite strong curiosity. We cannot make our minds other than God has made them, and the law of the mind is that familiarity with any phenomenon, however marvellous, dulls our sense of its marvellousness, and so deadens our interest in it. A love of novelty is innate in the mind. We may indeed carry this passion to an unwholesome extent, but rid ourselves of it we may not, as long as we are men.

But then is it at all just or true to suppose that the Scripture has no novelties lying hid beneath its surface, however familiar we may be with its

letter? Is it conceivable that the Scripture, which is the reflexion of God's Wisdom, should be ever exhausted by any finite intelligence, so that that intelligence should be able to say, "There is nothing fresh for me in Scripture; I have fathomed every mine in it and rifled its every treasure"?

Let us consider this point a little more deeply. It has indeed a most practical bearing on the tone of mind in which we read the Scriptures.

The field of Scripture then admits, as we remarked in our last Chapter, of a very just comparison with the field of Nature. Both Scripture and Nature are from the same Hand; they are both the offspring of the same Wisdom; we should on that ground alone expect to find resemblances between them. It is the same with the works of human authors. One style generally pervades an author's works, and communicates to all of them certain features of resemblance. Nor could one author probably, without a painful constraint, force himself to adopt the style of another. Nay, if he did so, the effort would perhaps be unsuccessful, and one of his own mannerisms here and there, which he had overlooked, would betray him.

Now then consider the field of Nature. Has it not wondrous things many and inexhaustible; wonders on a large scale, and wonders on a small? First, it has beautiful landscapes, which it asks no effort to admire, which we have only to open our eyes and behold. And though landscapes vary in

beauty, there are perhaps fewer than we imagine, in which a contemplative eye can discover nothing of the beautiful. Rugged countries, with their purple heather and their wild heights, though wanting in wood and foliage, may not be deficient in sublimity. Tame countries on a dead level, yet with abundance of trees and hedgerows, have, despite of their monotony, a pleasant domestic character. But just as it is with Scripture, so it is with Nature. Familiarity with it has a tendency to blunt our perceptions of its beauty. Daily intercourse with it closes our eyes to the features of excellence which it may have. We take our walk or our drive in the circuit of a few miles from our dwelling; and we gradually lose all the impression which the scenery may have made upon us at first.

But it does not follow from hence that that portion of Nature which lies in our immediate vicinity contains no wonders. Wonders there may be in abundance, but they only reveal themselves to those who are at the pains of investigating them. As the rich man lazily rolls along in his carriage, and indolently complains of the tameness of the landscape, there may be wondrous things in the geological strata beneath his feet; fossil animals; evidences of volcanic agency. There may be gold dust in the streams, iron ore in the stones; nay, as at Cracow, it may happen that, in the earth's bowels there shall be lofty vaulted

palaces of rock-salt, which appear by the light of flambeaux like so many crystals, or precious stones of various colours, casting a lustre which the eye can scarcely bear. A slight amount of research and exertion would reach and discover these things, and would turn a residence in an otherwise tame country into a perpetual feast of curiosity.

But the inventions of art furnish a most important aid in desecrating the wondrous things of nature. Let us have in our hands but one of those inventions, and the commonest and most humble district becomes stocked to our eyes with wonders perfectly inexhaustible; wonders in the height above, and wonders in the depth below.

First, there are the wonders to which the telescope opens our eyes. It reveals to us worlds lit by a common lamp with our own, several of them larger than the Earth; and numbers of flaming balls scattered in brilliant profusion over the midnight sky, which perchance serve as suns of other systems. There is much here to interest, to elevate, to open a wide field for speculation; and the astronomer will patiently watch for hours, exposed to the night-dews and the cold, to ascertain the truth in regard to some phenomenon of the heavens.

Then there are the no less marvellous wonders of the microscope. This reveals to us a plurality of worlds in the most contracted limits, as the telescope had revealed to us a plurality in the vast

reaches of space. We are enabled by it to detect a complicated structure of veins and arteries in the tiniest insect, the fine fibres of a leaf conveying the sap to its extremities, and the exactly formed colour-cells of a single blossom. Little rocky basins on the sea-coast, lined with seaweeds, and thronged by the smallest class of fishes, are to one viewing them through such an instrument, complete worlds in themselves, presenting at every research fresh matter for curious investigation and interesting discovery.

Now all that has been said admits of a close application to the Scripture of Truth. The only difference is, that the wondrous things of God's Law are greater and more marvellous by far than any thing which meets us in His Works ; for we are told that He has magnified His Word above all His Name, i. e., above every thing connected with Him.

Scripture, like Nature, has its more interesting and its less interesting districts, that is, districts which present less interest *upon the surface*. It has on the one hand its grand chapters and its pathetic chapters ; it has its first of Genesis, describing how step upon step all things solemnly and sublimely rose beneath the fiat of the great Architect, until man, the master-structure, holding of heaven by his spirit, and of earth by his body, crowned the whole ; it has its first of St. John, in which the Evangelist's eagle-eye fixes

itself upon the Sun of Christ's Godhead ; its fifteenth of St. Luke, and its forty-fourth of Genesis, unrivalled for pathos, containing—the latter the moving account of Judah's intercession for Benjamin, and the former the return of the Prodigal Son ; its fifteenth of the First to the Corinthians, reverberating with the last trumpet-sound and the voice of the Archangel, which shall wake the dead, and close the history of man's probation. These are the grand and soft landscapes of Scripture : these are its Alps, its lakes, its quiet and domestic scenery.

On the other hand, Scripture has passages far less imposing on the surface, its flats and levels, its apparent (I say only apparent) wastes.

It has its genealogical chapters ; long lists of names, without any biographical notice of the persons who bore them. It has the entire ceremonial in detail of the Levitical law, bearing the stamp of customs totally different from our own, and foreign to all our associations. It has its tangled brushwood and wild jungles, in the perplexities which some of the prophetical writings seem to present, and which perhaps are never designed to be wholly cleared.

But mark. It does not follow from what has been said that these less interesting passages of Holy Writ contain nothing beneath the surface very worthy of research, and which will abundantly repay investigation. The salt mine with its

crystal pendants and stalactites of all the colours of the rainbow, the gold mine with its rich store of treasure, may lurk beneath the most desolate and dreary tracts of the earth. And so it may be in Scripture. Every part of it contains some lesson, or subserves some useful purpose, in the economy of the System of Divine Grace. That lesson and that purpose are often withdrawn and lie hid very deep, partly, no doubt, with the design of exciting curiosity and research. We read that “it is the glory of God to conceal a thing : but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.” Solomon was thinking of himself when he spoke of kings ; he could not conceive any task more worthy of the man of the highest rank, than research into revelations which God had made to invite a humble and adoring research. It is probable that some of the readers of this little book never heard of the prayer of Jabez, have no notion who Jabez was, or in what part of the Scripture his prayer is recorded. And why so ? Because you are in the habit of leaving unexplored those tracts of Scripture which present nothing of interest on the surface. Jabez’s prayer occurs in the heart of a long series of genealogical chapters ; and therefore it is never brought before ordinary readers, who imagine that there can be nothing edifying in a list of names.

The truth is that God will show no wondrous thing out of His Law to those who, whether from

indifference or sloth, will not be at the pains to search it out. "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you," is not simply an exhortation to prayer; it is a great principle pervading all God's dealings with us. If a man thinks lightly of God's Law, does not honour it in his mind, considers that it has few or no wonders to reveal to him, he is not likely to find any wonders there. To read it listlessly, grudgingly, thoughtlessly, contented with the simple passage of the mind through the ideas of the text, can be attended with no fruit. One who rolls easily in his carriage along the road, is not in the way to pick up a fossil, to find or to see a salt mine. Fossils, diamonds, and salt mines, lie under the road, not upon it.

But think not that research into the Holy Oracles, however painstaking, however devout, is of itself, and by itself, sufficient to develope the wondrous things which lie hid in the Law. It is not so. A man's perception of the wonderfulness of Nature will reach but a very little way, despite all his efforts, unless he is aided by the microscope and telescope. What is an observer of Nature without these instruments? A dim-sighted creature at best, limited to a very narrow circumference. And accordingly the Psalmist does not say "*I will* open mine eyes," I have but to open mine eyes, and I shall see wondrous things out of

Thy law ; but, recognising the absolute need of external aid, aid from without, aid neither of himself nor by himself, he prays, “Open *Thou* mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.” Without the Divine Illumination he felt that he could no more see the glories and wonders of the Law, than a man without a telescope can see the belt of Saturn. So he cries to God to furnish him with that illumination. That He will furnish it to all who ask, is conclusively proved by the fact that His doing so is a branch of the New Covenant, which He has graciously bound Himself to fulfil towards us in His Son. “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord : I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people : and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord ; for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest.”

“All shall know Me,” and how ? Let Christ’s own words answer. “When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth,”—*οδηγήσει ἵμας*—He shall take you by the hand, and lead you into all truth, conducting you through the medium of the written Word into the deep mine of the Divine counsels. This Divine Illumination, this guidance, will not be distinguishable in our consciousness from the

operation of our own minds. The Holy Spirit will hide Himself in the depths of the intelligence, deeper down than the first springs of thought. Nevertheless His help and illumination are totally external to the human mind ; nor have we them of ourselves nor by ourselves. The resource for beholding the wondrous things is furnished freely, in infinite Love, by God Himself.

We may carry our comparison yet one step further. As there are wonders disclosed by both the telescope and microscope, wonders both on a large and a small scale, even so the wonders of Holy Scripture are discernible alike in its vast tracts and its small fragments. Our Church accordingly indicates to us two different modes of studying Holy Scripture. We may read large portions of it at a time (the four daily Lessons are large portions), or we may concentrate the attention minutely on fragments ; the Epistles and Gospels are but fragments, and as they serve for a whole week (unlike the Lessons) would not usually supply much more than three or four verses a day for private meditation and minute research. Each method of study has its advantage, and one is the just complement of the other. One exhibits the harmonious adjustment of the teaching of Scripture, and saturates the mind with its Lessons of Wisdom ; the other brings to light the perfectness of its structure in little details, and must be adopted, if we would enter into the truth

and beauty of the title which Bengel gives to his Gnomon of the New Testament.

“Gnomon Novi Testamenti ; in quo ex nativâ verborum vi Simplicitas, Profunditas, Concinnitas, Salubritas, Sensuum Cælestium indicatur.” (“A Gnomon of the New Testament, in which, from the natural force of the words, the Simplicity, Depth, Propriety, and Wholesomeness of the Heavenly Significations is pointed out.”)

In concluding our Chapter, Reader, let us ask ourselves seriously, what is the ground of that strange want of interest in the oracles of God, which attaches to the best of us, and makes even those who are attracted by the dignity and importance of its topics, seek their Theology from any source rather than the Bible ? It is, I fear, that we are interested in Theology, not in Religion ; in questions and controversies, rather than in godly edifying which is in faith. Our *minds* are interested, and we read Religious Works to feed and stimulate them. Our *hearts* are comparatively uninterested, and so the light of the heart, the food of the heart, the joy of the heart, the comfort of the heart, are reckoned cheap and common things in our eyes.

Oh, when will this be otherwise ? When shall our keen interest *about* Religion begin to give place to a keen interest *in* Religion ? When shall we experience the thirst of the heart in Truth, as distinct from the thirst of the mind ?

The answer is ready at hand. Religion is designed to be a Life ; not a speculative truth, but a practical truth ; not a truth discussed and agitated, but a truth lived upon, fed upon, turned into the daily nourishment of the soul. Carry out its design then. Do not talk Religion, but live Religion. Say of Religion, "I need it, not to settle moot points with, or decide doubtful questions, but to make me happy, to make me wise, to console me in my troubles, to bring me off conqueror in my temptations." Resolve to become acquainted with Religion on that side of it. We are not saying that controversy is unnecessary, or that the Faith as it is in Jesus does not need bulwarks,—Creeds, Articles, and controversial works in its defence ; but we are saying that these bulwarks are not what we need to make us happy, however much they may be needed to make us safe. Fortifications are necessary, it may be, to the security of a town ; there must be pieces of artillery on the rampart, and persons skilled to fire them ; but fortifications supply neither bread, nor comfort, nor delight ; persons do not look for these things from them ; they are not a substitute for provisions, nor for parks and pleasure-grounds.

Be assured that Religion has its resources, its parks and pleasure-grounds. Seek not always to hang about its bulwarks, but resolve to enter into its gardens and to expatiate in its pleasant places.

In other words, strive with might and main, despite all the unkindness and want of sympathy of man, all the opposition of the devil, to live, in the depths of your mind, a life of communion with God—communion calm, sweet, and unbroken. You may fail many times a day, at first, to maintain that beautiful, delicate state of mind, which is ruptured at once by passion, or anxiety, or self-indulgence; that state of mind of which the two main ingredients are, faith in God and love to man. But heal the wound by the Blood and Grace of Christ, and try again. You shall make progress by little and little in God's School, sure and solid, even if slow. Then, the moment you are really acquainted with the fluctuations of the spiritual life, the moment you endeavour to keep the needle of the heart true to the pole of Divine Love, and find it oscillating and trembling beneath your daily experience of the rude rocking of the sea of this world, there shall be no need then of any inducement to the study of the Scriptures. The interest of all other works shall wane and fade in comparison of theirs. They are a Book for the heart ; and the heart, when awake to the interests of Religion, is attracted towards them by an irresistible magnetism. There shall be no need then to testify to you of wondrous things in God's Law, for your eye will of itself discern and live in the enjoyment of them.

CHAPTER V.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO FACILITATE THOUGHT.

"Blinding himself to go afoot."—Acts xx. 13.

Significance of every word in the slight sketches of Holy Scripture—St. Paul's departure from Troas on his return from his Asiatic tour—His probable design in going *on foot* from Troas to Assos—Necessity of retirement in order to Communion with God—Impossibility of this retirement for the poor, and consequent advisableness of opening the Churches for them—Meditation on Holy Scripture may be carried on in any hour of solitude, if a passage be fixed in the mind previously by a short effort of attention—Difficulty of fixing the thoughts may be remedied by a play of the fancy—Imagining that we are to explain to others will make our own thoughts clear—Objection, that periods of leisure would thus lose their power of refreshment, answered—The mind, in waking hours, always engaged in thinking of something—This something often trivial, often positively evil—Contact of the human mind with the mind of God cannot be wanting in refreshment—Hints for Meditation in company—Power of Conversation to stimulate thought—Tendency of Conversation to turn to trifling or mischievous subjects—The Disciples on the road to Emmaus—The high standard of Christian Conversation—Have we the Spiritual Life, if we acquiesce in a lower standard?—Essential connexion of Life with Growth—The Author's desire for the spiritual progress of those under his pastoral charge.

In drawing, it is a great point of skill to communicate effect by a very few rapid and simple

strokes. The fewer and simpler the strokes, by which the effect is produced, the greater is accounted the excellence of the artist.

The narratives of Holy Scripture resemble an outline drawing of consummate excellence. They are all brief, simple, cursory, and rapid. But every stroke of the pencil has its effect. Every little trait of the narrative is full of significance,—reveals to us, when pondered, some material feature of the circumstances described.

Thus it is with the few words which stand at the head of this Chapter.

St. Paul has set his face towards Jerusalem : he was concluding the last Apostolic tour, which, previously to his captivity, he was destined to make. The Troad, as it had been in the first instance his point of departure for Europe, so it was the first Asiatic ground on which his feet trod in returning. He spent seven days here, the last of which was solemnized by a religious assembly of Christians, at which Eutychus met his death, and was afterwards miraculously restored. The assembly having been brought to a close, and the Lord's Supper having been administered, St. Paul saw his companions in travel embark on shipboard, in order to pursue their coasting voyage round the shores of Asia Minor, after doubling Cape Lectum. The vessel was to stop at Assos (probably to take in supplies),

and there Paul engaged to meet and rejoin his comrades. For himself, he was *minded to go afoot*, taking a straight course (the walk would be about twenty miles) across the Promontory, instead of making the circuit of it.*

This plan would be attended with two advantages. First, it would give St. Paul more time with the disciples at Troas, and as he was clearly aware† that this would be his final visit to his Asiatic converts, these few hours more were naturally esteemed a great privilege and a comfort. But there was probably another and a deeper reason for this arrangement, one even more congenial with the tone of an Apostle's mind. Shipboard (especially as ships were constructed in ancient times) would be unfavourable to that Communion with God, which is the life of the soul. No space, under such circumstances, can be spared for retirement. There would be a crowd on deck, a crowd below, closely packed, and possibly noisy. In such a situation it would be difficult, if not impossible, for St. Paul to take a calm and collected review of what lay before him, and to seek from his LORD that inward strength and peace, which was essential to bear up his heart amid the difficulties which loomed upon his prophetic eye in the horizon of the

* See Conybeare and Howson's Life of St. Paul, chap. xx.

† See Acts xx. 25, 38.

future. This strength, we may be sure, he sought amid the oak groves and hot springs, through which his solitary walk lay. In that walk he was free and unrestrained as the air which blew around, and as the waters which occasionally gushed at his feet ; and probably the thought of Him, who on the mountain and in the garden spent whole nights in prayer, crossed his mind ever and anon with refreshing and invigorating power.

We may take occasion from what has been said, to reflect how great a blessing and advantage is the feasibility of retirement which persons in the higher classes enjoy. "Enter into thy closet," says Our Lord, "and shut the door ;" but it is by no means every one who has a closet into which he can enter. Think of the case of the poor in some great manufacturing city. They are busily employed from morning till night in crowded factories, where is to be heard nothing but the whirr of wheels, and the clank of machinery, mingled too often with the profane jest and the ribald song ; and when at home, the little lodging is so closely packed with inmates, that any thing in the shape of retirement is out of the question. Would that, for the sake of these, our Churches stood open day and night, in order to afford them opportunities of (at least comparative) calm and retirement. The Church too would be a place where every object that

met the eye would have a tendency to raise and solemnize the mind ; and though, of course, it must be admitted that even the Church is not the place of our Saviour's appointment (the place which He recommends is one entirely secluded from human observation), still it is far more akin to the closet than a crowded and foul lodging-house, tenanted by persons of every sex and age.

But it is time to turn to our more immediate subject—the Devotional Study of the Holy Scriptures. In our second Chapter, the difference between Attention and Thought was explained. In this we shall give some short suggestions of a practical character, which may facilitate Thought.

Our first suggestion shall be this ; that meditation on Scripture (unlike the perusal of it) need not be limited to set times, but may be carried on profitably in any hour of solitude, and whenever the mind is not otherwise engaged. Let the little time which you can secure for the study of Scripture in the house, be devoted to the fixing the substance (and as far as possible the expressions) of some very brief passage in the memory. Simple close attention for five minutes will enable you to retain a short Parable, or a short Psalm, or the narrative of a Miracle. Lay it up in your memory, to be drawn forth as occasion serves. Possibly at some interval during the day, you may be alone. Have recourse to it

then, and ask yourself seriously, as in the sight of God, what practical lessons it is designed to teach, what bearing it has upon your spiritual welfare.

At first you will find it difficult to prevent the thoughts from flying off to other topics. The power of fixing the mind is only to be gained by habit. Perhaps a little effort of the fancy may here lend us some assistance. During a solitary walk, or at any other period of leisure, imagine that, when you return, you will be called upon to address an audience on the subject which you propose for meditation. Time presses ; and when you enter into society again, some ideas must be forthcoming. Some little fiction of this sort often stands the mind in good stead, by forcing it with gentle violence into the attitude of Meditation. And there is another advantage, which arises from throwing ourselves ideally into the position of a teacher or expositor. It is a plan which will compel clearness of thought. Orally to explain any thing to others is hopeless, unless first we ourselves are thoroughly clear upon it. It wonderfully disentangles all difficulties, to consider how we could make plain to other minds the truth which is thus beset to our own.

It may be thought, perhaps, that the mental exertion which I am recommending, would defeat the purpose of hours of recreation. To which I answer, that I am not advocating the

necessity of employing thus every interval of leisure, but only pointing out that such intervals *may* be thus profitably employed, when time cannot be otherwise gained for an exercise which is all-important. However, I cannot think that, upon the whole, the relaxation, of which we all stand in need, would lose its power of refreshment, if some good portion of it were thus consecrated to the highest of all purposes. It is hardly a question between mental repose and mental exertion. The mind is always engaged, during waking hours, in thinking of *something*; it never lies completely inactive. With the old and busy it turns, as soon as it is released from direct duties, upon anxieties or worldly schemes; and little refreshment, I trow, does it gain from pursuing these. With the young, and those on whom life is opening, it indulges frequently in castle-building, a habit injurious, if much cultivated, to a healthy tone of character, and destructive of energy in work. He who indulges in baseless dreams of the distinguished or happy positions which he is hereafter to hold, who imagines a senate carried along resistless by his eloquence, or a spell laid upon every mind by his poetry, or a revolution in literature caused by his works, is exerting his mind certainly; the tension is strong and powerful for the time; but it is an exertion (like undue gymnastic exercise) too likely to result in premature imbecility.

These, however, are the more innocent shapes, which unchastised and unbridled thought assumes. Who will say that its shapes are always, or even generally, of this character? Who will say that the mind, in a simple state of vacancy, simply unpossessed of good thoughts, is in a safe, or indeed in any thing else than a most precarious condition? The house in the Gospels, which the unclean spirit left for a while, was again re-occupied by him, in sevenfold force, simply because he found it on his return vacant; because it had not been tenanted, during his absence, with a better and a stronger occupant. And has it not often happened, that in the hour when the mind has been released from active business, and not definitely engaged with any particular line of thought, the demon of Pride, or Revenge, or unclean Lust, has assailed it, and in consequence of its entire unguardedness and abandonment, has carried all before him, without striking a single blow?

But, independently of considerations such as these, and on the hypothesis (which is yet contrary to the truth) that unrestrained thought were always perfectly innocent, can we suppose that more real refreshment of mind is to be gathered from revolving matters of mere earthly and temporal concern, than from reflection upon the lively Oracles of the Living God? Impossible! In the nature of things impossible!

Remember what that Word is. Remember that in it is enshrined the Spirit of God and the Mind of Christ; and that therefore, in bringing our minds into contact with the Word, we are really bringing them into contact with the Infinite Mind. Can such contact, even if it alarm occasionally, ultimately do otherwise than console, pacify, and tranquillize us? It cannot but impart to us true peace in the root of our being, in the spring and source of our moral character; and can such peace be other than the highest boon which man can enjoy?

We have spoken of the use to which hours of solitude, whether they be hours of recreation or sleepless hours of the night, may be turned.

But can no suggestion be made on the subject of Meditation, in reference to the hours when we are in company? It was said to the Israelites of the Law of Moses, and it is said by implication to the Christian of the whole revealed counsel of God: "These words which I command thee shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and *shalt talk of them* when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."*

We have seen how to sanctify solitude. Now we are to see how to sanctify company. Upon

* Deut. vi. 6, 7.

any topic whatever, it is surprising how conversation, the bringing our mind into contact with other minds, has a tendency to stimulate, quicken, and enlighten thought. Scarcely any more useful suggestion can be made for the disentanglement of a difficult and intricate subject, than conference with others,—I mean, of course, such conference as is dictated by a simple desire of knowledge, and not by the love of ostentation and display.

Let us then apply this principle, drawn from ordinary experience, to the understanding of God's Holy Word. Let us, at right seasons and with suitable persons, communicate our thoughts to others upon it, and listen to their suggestions in return. Discussion here, as on other subjects, cannot but stimulate thought. A casual remark, dropped in conversation, has often become the seed of a great thought, in the mind of one to whom it was made. And what more profitable subject than the Holy Scriptures can we, when in company with an intimate friend, discuss? Unbridled words, no less than unbridled thoughts, are apt to turn to subjects which were much better not discussed, and from which, at best, not the smallest benefit can arise either to the speaker or the listener. Such are the conduct and character of our neighbours, the little gossip and scandal (as mischievous as it is contemptible) of the circle in which we move. There is a pathway for con-

versation to travel in, in which we may encounter the LORD's own Presence, and carry away His Blessing. The two disciples talked of Him by the way as they walked to Emmaus ; and the blessed result was, that He accompanied their footsteps, and enlightened their minds by the interpretation of the Scriptures, and caused their hearts to burn within them. Shall we never show ourselves emulous of so high a Blessing ? Alas ! how lamentably short does our practice fall of that standard of duty which God has revealed ! "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom : teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."* Who is there that, as a fact, does so speak ? Who is there among us that even sets before him as an object of attainment (possible of attainment surely, or it would not be enjoined) a standard of Christian practice so lofty and so saintly as this ?

Reader,—and especially those Readers for whose souls I am bound to watch, and to whom this Volume is in the first instance addressed,—I am anxious to press upon you, that however arduous the standard of duty to which God's Word calls us, that heart is not a true heart which wilfully acquiesces in a lower one ; that the reasoning is corrupt which says, "I will go thus far in religion,

* Col. iii. 16.

and allow it thus much influence over me, but the common path of common Christians, the common standard of devoutness and innocence of life is sufficient for me ; I aim at nothing loftier."

Nay, but does not this argue that spiritual life is not in thee ? For what is spiritual life but spiritual movement, spiritual progress, spiritual growth ? what is it but a daily waxing and ripening towards the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ ? Life is inconsistent (I do not say, God forbid ! with any thing short of the highest standard, but) with *acquiescence in any thing short of the highest standard.* And therefore, if you ask me whether I should be well contented if our little Society could be purged entirely from those outbreaks of positive vice which beset and humble (more or less) all Public Schools, I answer—No, I am not content,—*Excelsior !*

If you ask me whether it is not enough that you should be amiable, obedient, and orderly boys, and should leave School without having imbibed any positive evil there, I answer—No, by no means enough,—*Excelsior !*

If you ask me whether a general decorousness of behaviour, and on the whole a general attentiveness to Christian Instruction, would not satisfy me ; would not be all that any one could expect or demand from you, I answer—No, by no means all,—*Excelsior !*

I wish you to be fully and deeply impressed

with the truth, that, except in a progressive sanctification, a sanctification whose very principle is, that it does not stop short at a certain point, there is no safety for man or boy ; that Time, and Opportunity, and Means, and Advantages, are slipping out of our hands every moment ; and that ere long, from each of us, the fruit of *Saintliness* will be required, at a Tribunal from which there is no appeal. We are nearing another stage in our pilgrimage, the High Festival of Easter. When the invitation is issued, and the Holy Table spread for that Festival, will you be able to say that you are somewhat stronger, riper, more established, more enlightened, than on the first Sunday of our meeting together at the Sacred Board ? Consider seriously whether there is not some practice which you might adopt, which might in some measure justify such a verdict. Consider whether daily meditation on Holy Scripture be not such a practice. And may the Lord stir up the hearts of His faithful people, that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of Him be plenteously rewarded !

CHAPTER VI.

THE ADAPTATION OF THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TO THE MORAL NATURE OF MAN.

"Sanctify them through thy Truth: thy Word is Truth."—
JOHN xvii. 17.

Sanctification of Man's Moral Nature the general design of Holy Scripture—The parts of Man's Moral Nature—The Affections—The Practical Reason—The Imagination, and its moral influence—Division of the Old Testament—how Proverbs and History fall under one class—reason why the moral of certain narratives is absent—Poetry of the Old Testament divided into Poetry of Affections and Poetry of Imagination—Psalms the Poetry of the Affections—their practical use founded upon this view of them, and illustrated—position in the Liturgy consonant with their character—their use as a test of Religious Affections—How to use the Narrative and Proverbs so that one may illustrate the other—Portability of Proverbs to the memory, and its bearing on our Sanctification—The Prophetical Writings an Inspired Epic—Definition of an Epic—Christ a Divine Hero, and the incidents of His Career—The Heroism of the passive Virtues—How the Levitical Law contains Poetry—provision made in it for the love of Symbolism—As the key needs a hand to apply it, so the Word, though adapted to our Sanctification, must be applied by the Spirit of God—Conclusion.

IN our last Chapter we considered the *general* character of the Holy Scriptures. In this, we proceed to divide the Sacred Volume into its com-

ponent parts, and to consider the *specific* character which each part bears.

One of the questions which the thoughtful reader of the Bible will ask himself, and which it is important that he should be able to answer, is—What is the special design of this part of Holy Scripture, which I am now taking up? He will make it a subject of prayer to Almighty God, that that special design may be answered in his own case.

The general design of Holy Scripture is given in the passage which stands at the head of this Chapter:—“Sanctify them through Thy Truth.” Sanctification is the object of the entire Volume. He who reads the Bible without experiencing in his heart, or evincing in his life, any sanctifying influence; he whose affections it never stirs, whose understanding it never enlightens, whose imagination it never exalts, whose will it never directs, whose conscience it never reaches, may be quite sure that, from whatever cause, he does not read aright.

As the Scripture then is designed to operate upon the moral nature of Man, we shall probably find a correspondence in its parts to the parts of that moral nature. Thus our first inquiry must be, Of what parts does man’s moral nature consist? In other and simpler words, what are the springs of human character and conduct?

The first of these is obviously the Affections. Men pursue certain objects and avoid others,

because they love and hate, hope and fear, feel resentment or compassion. Love, hate, hope, fear, resentment, and compassion, are affections.

The next is Reason; not the speculative Reason, not that by which we contemplate abstract Truth: but the practical Reason, for the exercise of which every-day life presents numerous occasions. Many persons act, from prudential considerations, against present inclination. In most instances, these prudential considerations are purely worldly. A man lays by money against the time of his old age or sickness, or as provision for his family, which he might spend upon present gratification. In some instances, the prudential considerations are heavenly and spiritual in their character. Thus we are told of Moses, that he esteemed the "reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."* To drop a moral phraseology and adopt a spiritual one, prudential considerations, when they fasten not on the world, or on the ordinary course of affairs, but on Eternity, and on God's Word and Providence, are, in one word, "Faith." And they are based, as all sound and healthy Faith is, upon Reason.

The third moral faculty is the Imagination. The Imagination, no less than the Affections and the Reason, influences conduct. The knights

* Heb. xi. 26.

errant of the period of chivalry are an illustration of this. Their ideal dream of love, honour, and enterprise, exerted a very real influence on their whole course of life; in short, gave its complexion to all their pursuits. And still, even in these degenerate, commercial, money-loving days, considerations of this kind, which I class under the head of *romantic*, have weight and influence with many. All the moral powers may be summed up under these three heads.

Now let us consider whether, in the Holy Scriptures, there be not a tripartite division, corresponding to this.

In the present Chapter we will deal solely with the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is an Inspired Volume, comprising a mass of History and a mass of Poetry; and embracing, in addition to these, that which is neither History nor Poetry, the Book of Proverbs, with its attendant satellite, the Book of Ecclesiastes.

But though Proverbs are not History, there is a class under which both Proverbs and History will fall. Both are *records of human experience*, the one in extenso, the other in summary. The Historian presents to you the naked example, and leaves you to gather the moral lessons for yourself. We remarked in the last Chapter that the moral lessons to be gathered from the examples of Scripture are seldom or ever attached to the

examples: instead of this, the Old Testament has one great repository of Inspired Moral Maxims, called Proverbs, and to adapt these maxims to the several narratives, is the part left for Thought to do; so that it is foolish to find a stumbling-block in the fact of these maxims being omitted in the History; (as when people say, how surprising that we are not told that God disapproved of Jacob's flagrant deceit, or of Judas's suicide!) the truth being that God designs us to draw these lessons for ourselves, intending not to supersede thought, but to stimulate it, by His Book.

The Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes then may be called, Divine Prudential considerations *in the abstract*; the narrative parts of the Old Testament bring to bear upon us the same prudential considerations *in the concrete*, that is, in the form of example.

The Poetry of the Old Testament may be divided, like other Poetry, into the Poetry of the Affections and the Poetry of the Imagination. Of this latter class one species is the Symbolical.

The Book of Psalms constitutes the Poetry of the Affections. Its attendant satellites (I mean Books of a similar character, and properly placed in the same class) are the Song of Solomon and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, with detached passages here and there from the Prophets.

The Poetry of the Imagination is to be found in the Prophetical Writings. They may be re-

garded as Inspired Epics, whose theme is the Advent and Triumph of a great Deliverer, whose Glories, one after another, burst upon the eye of the Prophet through the haze which envelopes the future.

The Poetry of Symbols is to be found in the Ceremonial Branch of the Mosaic Law, and in the various arrangements of the Jewish Ritual.

We have then, I. Corresponding to the Human Affections, and specially adapted for their sanctification, the Book of Psalms, with the Song of Songs. II. Corresponding to the Reason, the Narrative Books, with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. III. Corresponding to the Imagination, the Prophetical Books and the Ceremonial Law. A few words on each of these:

I. The Psalms, as they give expression to, so they have a natural tendency to rouse, kindle, and animate the Religious Affections of men.

As every hue of the setting sun is reflected in the mirror of a glassy lake, so in the Psalms is reflected every phase of spiritual feeling, from the deepest humiliation under a sense of sin, to the most triumphant rejoicing in the conquest of Sin and Death by a crucified and risen Messiah. Hope, fear, trust, sorrow, love of God, and hatred of evil, the plaintive mourning of the dove, the roar of inner disquietude, the voice of joy and praise, alternate in these Holy Songs, and furnish expressions and stimulants for every mood of mind.

It should be borne in mind then, while reading the Book of Psalms, that this is their main character. The edification chiefly sought in them should be that species of edification which is in conformity with their capital design. Resort to them, that you may hear in them the Voice of God the Comforter, when the affections are stirred, whether by the mere operation of natural spirits, or by circumstances, which, without, perhaps, being of much importance, yet touch you to the quick, either with joy or sorrow. Is it a bright day with us? Have many of those gleams of happiness glanced across our path, which are bestowed so abundantly when the heyday of youth is over, in the track of domestic life? Then, *Benedic, anima mea* (I like those old Latin headings in the Prayer Book Version; there is a rugged grandeur about them)—“Praise the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, praise His Holy Name.” See thou get it sung in that hour, not with the lips merely or mainly, or with artificial apparatus of music, but making melody in thy heart to the Lord; that melody of the devout affections, which, in His ear, who listens to the breathings of the heart, is more full of harmony than the merry lute and the harp.

Do apprehensions occupy thee respecting the future results of manly, Christian, and consistent conduct? Apprehensions stretching into that unseen to-morrow, when, for aught we know, the

framework of Nature may have collapsed, every thing of secular interest may have passed away, and we may be standing each one of us, in fearfully distinct individuality, before the Throne of the Judge ? Then these apprehensions argue a want of Faith. Turn to the Psalms, and they shall at once reprove and comfort thee. "He will not be afraid of any evil tidings : for his heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord. His heart is established, and will not shrink : until he see his desire upon his enemies."*

Have slanderous tongues been busy with our names ? have we, or our actions, been made the subject of defamatory gossip, our intentions misrepresented, or a wrong construction put upon our conduct ? I know not that it can hurt us : I am sure it cannot hurt us, if we do but turn to our Psalter, and seek to realise the comfort which those words hold out : "O how plentiful is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee ! and that Thou hast prepared for them that put their trust in Thee, even before the sons of men. Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men ; Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy Tabernacle from the strife of tongues."†

Finally, has the soul come to its lowest ebb of

* Ps. cxii. 7. Prayer Book Version.

† Ps. xxxi. 21. Prayer Book Version.

hope and comfort? Are there fightings without and fears within? Then this extremity is God's opportunity: He Himself presents us with an utterance appropriate to it, and will surely give ear to the cry which He has put into our mouth: "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord! Lord, hear my voice."*

That one main use of the Psalms is the scope for utterance which they afford to Christian Affections, may be gathered from the position which they occupy in the Liturgy. Here Psalms and Lessons, although embraced in the same Inspired Volume, are carefully discriminated as things of a different order. The Psalms are never read *to* us, as if they were didactic pieces addressed to the understanding (full of instruction of course they are, but instruction is not their main purport); they are read *by* us, and designed to be appropriated by us as the utterance before God of our soul's deep desires and needs.

In the closet, another practical use may be made of them. They may serve not only as a vehicle for religious Affections, but also as a test how far our affections *are* religious. They may be made a medium of self-examination,—a practice which ensures thought upon them, and which, if blessed and aided by God, is sure to be attended with the happiest results. How far am I truly

* Ps. cxxx. 1. Prayer Book Version.

repentant? Let me read the fifty-first Psalm, and consider how far my mind, on the subject of sin, goes along with, and enters into, the expressions of the Psalmist. How far do I love God's precepts, and realise the delightfulness of minute and conscientious obedience? The hundred and nineteenth Psalm furnishes abundance of tests. "I love Thy commandments above gold and precious stone.—The law of Thy mouth is dearer unto me than thousands of gold and silver—Lord, what love have I unto Thy law! all the day long is my study in it.—I have applied my heart to fulfil Thy statutes alway, even unto the end." * How far do I regard communion with God as a privilege, no less than as a duty? The question may be answered by turning to the eighty-fourth Psalm, and considering whether we can sincerely take up into our lips those expressions of devout aspiration: "O how amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou LORD of Hosts! My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh rejoice in the Living God." †

2. The narrative Books of the Old Testament, with the Book of Proverbs, are strictly lessons—didactic pieces addressed to the understanding; and when we read them, this should be borne in mind. The question upon which, in this instance,

* Ps. cxix. 127, 72, 97, 112. Prayer Book Version.

† Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2. Prayer Book Version.

Thought is to operate, is : What lesson for my daily guidance may be gathered from this example ? To what piece of human experience, recorded in the Book of God, or drawn from my study of life, is this aphorism applicable ? Indeed, it would be a profitable task, and one which would ensure reflection, to consider, in reading the Inspired Narratives, what Sacred Proverbs might be appended to them, and *vice versa*, in reading the Proverbs, to what narratives they might be attached as mottoes. Thus, the Proverb evidently applicable to the narrative of St. Peter's denial, when in the ardour of mere natural enthusiasm he first boasted, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death,"* and yet afterwards failed when the trial came ;—the Proverb, I say, which sums up the great lessons of this narrative, and presents them to us in a concise form, is obviously this, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."†

I should notice, also, the portability of the Proverbs to the memory, a result which follows from their conciseness, and from the exact form of parallelism into which most of them are cast. Memory is a faculty of the understanding, and exerts a great influence on our moral state. What a fast hold upon us, through the memory, has any unclean story or allusion ! It is necessary,

* Luke xxii. 33.

† Prov. xxviii. 26.

then, that the memory should be sanctified by the Word of God ; and this is done by treasuring up in the mind the aphorisms of Inspired Wisdom, and bringing them forth, as occasion serves, thereby to combat the maxims of the world, and the suggestions of the Evil One.

3. One or two words must suffice upon the Imagination, and the fitness of the Prophetical and Symbolical parts of Scripture to sanctify it.

God has not left unprovided with a field in which it may expatiate, the young and ardent Imagination. There is, in the Prophets, a Poetry which soars infinitely above the sublimest conceptions of heroism, and which, unlike those dreams of love, and enterprise, and chivalry, which contact with real life is sure to dissipate, either has been, or will be, certainly realised.

I must beware of bringing down my subject to the level of common matters, but I really know not how better to describe the general character of the Prophetical Writings than by calling them an Inspired Epic Poem.

I look out Epic Poem in the Dictionary, and I find these words : "An Epic Poem, otherwise called heroic, is a poem which narrates a story, *real*, or fictitious, or both, representing, in an elevated style, some signal action or actions, *usually the achievements of some distinguished hero*, and intended to form the morals and affect the

mind with the love of virtue." Now the whole of Prophecy gathers round CHRIST as its centre. The Second Adam, the true Hero, the rightful Claimant of the Sovereignty of the Earth, is the Song of all the Prophets "which have been since the world began." The incidents of the mighty Epic are the incidents of His career, His humble birth at Bethlehem, His unmitigated and profound sorrows, His betrayal by one in whom He had reposed the most affectionate trust, His triumphant entry into that which was by rightful descent His own Metropolis, and the Metropolis of the whole Earth, His miracles of mercy and of grace, the detestable sale of His sacred Person into the hands of His enemies, His cruel humiliation and death, and the final lifting up of His Head after He had drunk of the brook in the way, His elevation, triumph, and the glorious subjection of all things under His feet. One capital point of distinction between the Profane and the Inspired Epic is carefully to be noted. The heroes of the Profane Epic are heroes of activity. They dare, and do, and conquer; the active virtues shine prominent in them; every enterprise is one of dazzling brilliancy, like the hue of the marigold or the sunflower. Where shall we find the suffering Heroism that endures all things out of Love, the humble Heroism which shrinks from sight like the violet, but when discovered, has more fragrance and more

delicacy of hue than all the gaudy flowers which flaunt so unblushingly in the summer noon? Where but in that Holy One, Who, as being descended from the Woman, manifested most signally those passive graces which are the ornament of woman's character, and made those graces a medium for reflecting the glories and perfections of His Eternal Godhead; Who drew Himself away to the mountain, after His most signal acts of benevolence and grace, lest the people should come and place upon His brows the diadem of which He was born the heir? Reader, learn and deeply weigh the truth, that the Heroism of suffering and humility has far more grandeur and sublimity in it than the heroism of enterprise and lofty position. If God should stretch you all the days of your life upon a sick-bed, so that nothing you say or do should ever come abroad or transpire beyond the immediate circle of the kind friends who take turns to sit beside you and read and pray, you may be a truer hero there, may manifest a healthier courage and a more unshaken constancy, and a principle of action more chivalrous and sublime, than if you were now to head an army against the Autoerat of all the Russias, and to shed your heart's best blood in establishing and vindicating the liberties of Europe.

The Levitical Law is the only portion of the Scriptures of the Old Testament which remains

to be considered. And let it not be deemed strange that we rank it in the Poetical Department of the Volume. In its *circumstantials*, we readily admit that it is not Poetry. It has none of the accessories of Poetry, neither the style, nor the metre, nor the rhythmical structure, which ordinarily distinguish that species of Literature. But we may have the essentials of Poetry without its accidentals. To present grand and elevating imagery to the eye of the mind, by whatever means that effect is brought about, is truly the work of a Poet. Poetry is the Art which corresponds to the natural Faculty of the Imagination. And the great Field of the Imagination is the discernment of resemblances between different departments of the works of God. Now what resemblances can be more worthy of study, what can present a more interesting sphere in which the Imagination may expatiate, than those which God Himself has established between Shadow and Substance, Type and Anti-type, Figure and Reality? Some persons, it is evident, have a love of Symbolism; from their peculiar cast of mind they turn with delight to any representation of Divine Verities through the medium of things sensible and material. Now provision has been made in the Book of God for the gratification of this, as well as of all other intellectual tastes. God spake forth in Symbols the great events of His Gospel, long

before those events were enacted on the Theatre of the World. In the cleansing of the leper, in the loosing of the scapegoat, He pictured forth the method of our Redemption from Sin. In a thousand different figures (all comprising many details, and requiring minute study for their full comprehension) He represented different aspects of Him, Who is our Hope and Refuge, and different phases of His all-sufficient Work. Let the mind which has a tendency to Symbolism, betake itself to this Divine provision for its needs. Let it contemplate CHRIST in the Types, and acquire there the various particulars of the Grace and Mercy which is in Him. The minutiae of the Ceremonial Law present abundant scope for such study ; and even if we must add to our remarks on this head a warning against fancifulness and fanciful interpretations, surely Fancy, even where it goes wrong, might be employed in a less profitable and edifying manner than in studying resemblances, to which God Himself has called the attention of His people.

We have seen that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are a key, fitted and fashioned by God's own hand for the sanctification of His people ; that they correspond wonderfully to that Moral Nature which they are designed to influence. Yes, they are a key. But even a key will not open the lock to which it is adapted, without an external power to apply it. There

must be a hand to employ the key, or, despite of its admirable contrivance, it must be useless.

Similarly, the Holy Scriptures, unless enforced by God's own Power, will fail to exercise that influence upon our moral nature, which they are adapted to put forth. God's Hand must second His Word, if His Word is to be influential. It is through the Truth (that is, through the *instrumentality* of the Truth) that we are sanctified ; the *agency* must be that of the Spirit.

To Him, the Light, the Life, and the Comforter of His Church, together with the Father who loved us, and the Son who washed us from our sins in His own Blood, be glory in the Church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ADAPTATION OF THE GOSPELS TO THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE HUMAN AFFECTIONS.

"Sanctify them through thy Truth: thy Word is Truth."—
JOHN xvii. 17.

God's Word the instrument of Human Sanctification—It must necessarily be adapted to its end—Threefold division of the Books of the New Testament—Corresponding threefold division of the Moral Faculties—Affections attach universally to Human Nature under all circumstances—Why the renewal of Human Nature must commence with the Affections, and not with the Reason—Necessary Requirements in an object destined to engage the Affections and elevate the Character—It must be a Person—Why not a merely human Person?—The requirements fulfilled in CHRIST as the object of Worship and Trust—The presentation of CHRIST in the Gospel Narratives, adapted to attract the affections of the Heart—The Gospel successful with the affections, even where the understanding is but little enlightened—The Primacy of the Gospels in the Canon of the New Testament, with the grounds of it—How this Primacy is expressed in our Ritual—Conclusion.

THE ordinary meaning of the word "to sanctify" is "to make holy." In praying for His people, that they might be sanctified through the Truth, our Lord implies that the Truth is one of the

instruments or means which God employs in making us holy. And in the latter part of the text it is declared what this Truth is. The Word of God is Truth : and the form in which the Word of God has reached us is, of course, the written Volume of the Bible.

The absolute necessity then of studying the Scriptures, in order to the attainment of that holiness which is essential to happiness, is the first lesson which we gather from the words which stand at the head of this Chapter. If God's Word be one great means, whereby He makes men holy, how absolutely necessary is it, that the mind should continually come into contact with the Word, so as to derive through the appointed channel a sanctifying influence ! How can we expect, if we either neglect the study of the Bible, or study it superficially, without bestowing a thought upon it, and applying it to ourselves,—how can we expect to grow in grace, wisdom, and goodness ? Let us stedfastly adhere to the practice of reflecting daily upon some small portion of it (be it only two or three verses), and earnestly praying that God's Holy Spirit would apply it to our conscience, and make it effectual to the great end of our sanctification.

But the instruments which God employs are, we may be sure, adapted, with exquisite wisdom, to the ends which they are designed to fulfil. In the realm of Nature we see many such adaptations of

the instrument to its end (the hand of man, for example, bears evident marks of being designed for those particular services, which in the course of daily life it has to fulfil), and shall we not suppose such adaptations to exist in the realm of Grace ? Even Human Art makes the key correspond to the wards of the lock which it has to open ; and shall we imagine that God would employ, in the highest of all matters, an instrument which is not suitable to its purpose ?

The Bible, then, must be adapted to the purpose of human Sanctification, and in all probability, if we reflect upon the nature of its contents, we shall discover some points of this adaptation. We have already made this discovery in the various parts of the Old Testament. We now turn to that part of the Scriptures, with which, as Christians, we ought to be most familiar, the Books of the New Testament. These Books easily and naturally divide themselves into three classes, to each of which we will devote a single Chapter.

I. There are the Historical Books, called Gospels, with which may be classed as an Appendix, the Acts of the Apostles. These contain the facts and events, which are the Basis of the Scheme of Redemption. II. There are the Doctrinal Books, called Epistles. These explain, so far as it is susceptible of explanation, the Philosophy of the Scheme of Redemption. III. Lastly, there is the Book of Revelation, which, although it has other

and even more important bearings, may be said, I think, to comprise the Poetry of the glorious Scheme.

Corresponding to these three divisions of the New Testament, we find three distinct parts, powers, or principles of Human Nature, the Affections, the Understanding, and the Imagination. It will be my business to point out how the New Testament, in one or other of its departments, is exactly adapted to sanctify, refine, and purify one or other of these principles.

The Affections are a principle attaching universally to our nature, under every circumstance in which man finds himself placed. The rude and barbarous Caffre hopes and fears, loves and hates, is accessible to the emotions of compassion and gratitude, no less than the polished European, who is humanized by the courtesies of civil society; and if through the ignorance and barbarism of the one, and the education and refinement of the other, we could dig into the inner man, throwing off the incrustations which habit and circumstances have formed, and diving to the root of the character, there, in the dark abyss of the mine, we should find the same ore of the Affections, capable of being fashioned into a vessel either of honour or dishonour.

Now, seeing that the Affections of Man are the moving springs of his will and character, the renewal and sanctification of Human Nature must

commence with them. The heart which is alienated from God and goodness, must be turned towards God and goodness, as the first step in the process of renewal. Systems of heathen moral philosophy were in error here ; they did not propose to carry the remedy, in the first instance, to the root of the evil, to the seat of the disease. Their principle was to throw light into the intellect, by way of reforming the heart,—to convince men of the propriety and expediency of a virtuous life, in order that they might persuade to a virtuous life. The Understanding, however, is at fault, because the Affections are at fault. Man by nature loves his sin, and this partially affects and prejudices his understanding. How shall his case be remedied ? Clearly the first step is to give a right bias to the Affections. If these can be strongly engaged in behalf of a new and good object, they will thus be drawn off from the frivolous and wrong objects on which they formerly fastened : for two strong interests cannot exist simultaneously in the human heart ; no sooner does a new interest gain the ascendency than the old one wanes.

Moreover, this object, if it is to be influential with the great mass of mankind, *must be a Person*. Devoted adherents of a principle, or a class of opinions, do indeed exist, but they are rare spirits, and few have sympathy with them. Creeds, and principles, and doctrines, are but unsubstantial things, abstracted from a Person round whom

they revolve, and in whom they are embodied. Man cannot love abstractions : living realities are alone competent to develop and engage his affections.

But where shall we find a living reality adapted to the purpose ? Our fellow-creatures are all of them imperfect objects, themselves so full of failure, weakness, and guilt, that a too intense affection conceived for them, a too intense confidence reposed in them, instead of elevating our nature, would run the hazard of debasing it. Nay, even supposing that a perfect object could be found among our fellow-creatures, to place implicit trust in a mere creature, however holy, to yield to any one but the Creator the entire homage of the soul, this were the essence of idolatry. Yet, on the other hand, God, in the absolute perfection of His Nature, is not an object level to our apprehensions or our sympathies.

In short, if the Affections of man are to be elevated and refined, and cleansed from the dross of earthliness which cleaves to them, there needs to be presented to them, as that whereon they may fasten, a faultless Object ; an Object which we can apprehend and sympathize with, and yet, at the same time (if this Object is to engage all the homage of the heart), it must be none other than the Eternal God.

How exactly such an Object is presented to us in the Gospels, we can have no difficulty in

perceiving. These Inspired Histories do not, except incidentally and subordinately, instruct us in doctrines ; they present to our mind's eye a Person ; One who exhibited (while on earth), in harmonious combination, all the graces of human character, yea, rather I should say, all the Perfections of the Godhead, mirrored in the crystal glass of a sinless Humanity—"an High Priest, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,"—and yet One, in whom the heart may garner up its entire store of hope, and trust, and love, without hazard of Idolatry, inasmuch as in virtue of His Divine Nature, He is GOD OVER ALL, BLESSED FOR EVER. The great moral object of the Gospels is answered, if the affections of the heart be engaged with this Object, in such a manner as to influence the will, and through the will, the conduct. If by these inimitable portraiture of His earthly career, a man be drawn towards the risen Saviour in the bonds of alliance, trust, and love ; so drawn as to cultivate a heavenly friendship with Christ in the way which He Himself has appointed, by "keeping His commandments ;" so drawn as to find in spiritual Communion with Christ a solace and refreshment, which he seeks in vain elsewhere ; so drawn as for the love of Jesus to bear with the infirmities of Jesus's members, and to submit himself in meekness to

the Cross which Jesus lays upon him ; then have the Gospels fulfilled towards that man their great spiritual purpose, and he is sanctified through the Truth of God, brought to bear, in an efficient and practical manner, upon his *Affections*.

And may we not have good hope that the Gospel Narratives do thus take effect in many cases, where the Understanding and the Imagination are not sufficiently developed to appreciate the more difficult teachings of the Epistles and Apocalypse ? We believe that many a poor ignorant soul, to whom the doctrine of Justification by Faith, as stated in terms, would be a mere formula,—a string of unintelligible words, —yet really possesses Justification, because he possesses a real affiance in that Saviour, whose Merits, applied through faith, justify. Yea, may we not feel a comfortable assurance (I say this the more readily, because, while I am desirous to protest against Popery as a deadly heresy, I feel that there is a great danger lest, in our zeal for Truth, we lose sight of Love) that in the Romish Communion, where this precious and cardinal doctrine is explicitly denied, and where the theory of a sinner's acceptance with God, as taught by Divines, is radically erroneous—that even here many thousand poor souls, whose understanding is a blank on the all-important question, “What must I do to be saved ?” have their Affections really engaged with that Divine

Person, whose sufferings in their behalf are pourtrayed to the eye of the body through their Crucifixes, repose upon Him with implicit confidence, pray to Him with sincere fervour, and follow Him, to the best of their knowledge, in the path of self-devotedness and obedience?

Let us learn then, from what has been said, to assign to the Gospels their due honour. The Gospels stand first in the Canon of the New Testament, and this priority I regard as a kind of symbol, expressive of the important truth, that God's Scheme for renewing mankind and making them holy is not (at least fundamentally) a Philosophy which appeals to their Reason, nor a strain of Poetry which brings to bear upon them the power of Imagination, but rather an appeal by facts to those *Affections*,—those sentiments of Love, Fear, Hope, Desire, Gratitude,—which attach to man under all circumstances and climates, and are universally influential with him, whatever be his state of culture and civilization. In the theory, then, of Human Sanctification, the Gospels, which present to us a Person, and appeal to the Affections, occupy a higher position than the Epistles, which present to us doctrinal statements, and appeal to the Understanding. Some invert this order of regard, and speak as if they virtually limited the Canon of the New Testament to the Epistles, especially.

those of St. Paul. This is a sad error. To set the Epistles above the Gospels, is to set Light above Love. And, possibly, our Reformers may have intended to protest against such notions, and to indicate a certain superior regard, due to the Evangelical *Narratives*, when they left standing in the Communion Office an order which came down from the Primitive Times, that the people, who are seated previously, should *stand up* while the Priest reads the Gospel.

In conclusion, it will be well to ask ourselves whether the groundwork of Christianity has been ever yet laid in our hearts? Are our affections engaged with Christ, as his so eminently were, who gave to this our School all that it has to boast of excellence and efficiency? The great beauty of Dr. Arnold's religious character,—a beauty, which those who differ from him widely in sentiment, may yet be fully able to appreciate,—was that his heart was ever true to his Saviour as the needle to the pole. Is it so with us? The Gospels are designed and adapted to conciliate our affections to Christ. But those affections cannot be so conciliated, unless Christ Himself should by His Spirit draw us to Himself. The perusal of the appointed daily passage will be but a formal routine, except that Spirit enforce it on the conscience, and bring it home to the heart. Be thou then, Lord, the Agent in our

Sanctification! Draw us to Thyselv, when we
read Thy Gospel, with the bonds of affiance, and
gratitude, and love! And help us evermore to fol-
low Thee, with the prayer of Faith, in the path of
obedience and self-denial!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ADAPTATION OF THE EPISTLES TO THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

"Sanctify them through thy Truth: thy Word is Truth."—
JOHN xvii. 17.

The Divisions of the New Testament and of the Moral Faculties of man recapitulated—The Epistles contain the Philosophy of the Gospel tidings—Possibility of appreciating the Philosophy and Poetry of the Scheme of Redemption, without any emotion of the heart—Light without Love—The existence of a profound Wisdom in the Scheme of Redemption, argued from Scripture—and from Reason—Men dwell little upon this Wisdom, though alive to Wisdom in its other manifestations—The common want of appreciation of this Wisdom has its root in Pride—Several points enumerated, in which the Epistles unfold the Philosophy of the Scheme of Redemption—Entirely to follow this Philosophy is out of our power, and why—The revealed method of growing in the knowledge of Divine Truth, is to embody in our practice that knowledge to which we have attained.

THIS text (as we saw in our last Chapter) implies that the Truth of God is one great means which He employs in making Man holy. Now the Bible is the Truth of God; and that part of the

Bible with which, as Christians, we are most concerned—the Volume of the New Testament—may be divided, as we have already observed, into three parts,—the Gospels, with their Appendix, the Acts,—the Epistles,—and the Book of the Revelation. Corresponding to this three-fold division of the New Testament, we observed a threefold division of man's Moral Nature, which consists of the Affections, the Understanding, and the Imagination. We then proposed to consider how the Gospels are adapted to purify the Affections, the Epistles to enlighten the Understanding, the Revelation to refine the Imagination of man; and the first of these points was sufficiently discussed. We saw that the Gospels present to the Affections of man a Divine and yet a Human Person; One Who, because He is human, is level to our apprehensions and sympathies, and yet towards Whom, because Divine, the heart may pour forth its utmost store of love and trust and devotion, without fear of **Idolatry**.

The Gospels stand naturally first in the Canon of the New Testament; for the historical facts recorded in them are THE GOOD TIDINGS, the Basis which the other New Testament Writers assume, and upon which they build. Then, next upon the Tidings themselves, follows the Philosophy of the Tidings, unfolded in the Epistles, and the Poetry of the Tidings, which is sung (in

strains how sublime and stirring!) by the exiled Seer in Patmos.

And let me warn you, Reader, before proceeding to explain how the Epistles are adapted to enlighten the Understanding of Man, that it is very possible for the mind of an educated person to appreciate, in some measure, both the Philosophy and the Poetry of the Scheme of Redemption, whose heart has never been touched, in the slightest degree, by the Good Tidings of the Gospels. Such a person may possess a considerable insight into the principles of God's dealings with His creatures, and yet this shall not be inconsistent with such a coldness and indifference to the claim of Christianity upon the Affections, with such a want of interest in the tale of Jesu's Love and Jesu's Suffering, as shall conclusively argue that the Gospel, however much light it may have poured into the Understanding, however much it may have refined the Imagination, has never penetrated with healing, sanctifying influence to the seat of the character. We observed in the last Chapter, that the love of Christ may exist in the heart, where there is but a scanty measure of light on the subject of Christian doctrine. And conversely, Light may exist without Love. Yes, Light may exist; but it is like the cold silver lustre which, at midnight, streams down from the moon, streaking the dark water with a luminous line, and frosting

the stone pinnacles and buttresses of the Cathedral, then wrapped in a trance sleep,—a beautiful but unfructifying ray, destitute of genial warmth, whose shining men contemplate with admiration, but ply not under it their daily tasks. Even so the light which the Bible sheds upon the Understanding, and the influence which it exercises on the Imagination, may adorn and gild the surface of the character, without sanctifying, or even touching, its hidden springs; without giving it any power to grapple with Life, as it presents to us its varied forms of temptation, trouble, and emergency.

But let us proceed to the immediate business of the present Chapter.

And first, I would call your attention to the fact, that in the Scheme of Redemption *there is* a profound Wisdom. Although the Gospel of Christ be not (fundamentally) a Philosophy, yet *there is* a Philosophy of the Gospel; a Philosophy, whose depths are unfathomable by Human Reason. This is not unfrequently asserted in express terms. Take for example the words of St. Paul, “In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”* The marginal reading, “*wherein* are hid,” &c., refers us back to the preceding words, “the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;” *in which mystery* these treasures of wisdom and knowledge are said to be hid.

* Col. ii. 3.

And again, “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect, the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.”*

And Reason echoes back the same truth as Revelation. For is it reasonable to suppose that the infinitely Wise God could have devised other than an infinitely wise scheme for the Redemption of His creatures?

But I believe the Wisdom of the Scheme of Redemption, as distinct from its Grace, however apparent and obvious it be, is but very little thought of. Our thoughts instinctively connect Love and Mercy with the Gospel Scheme; they dwell comparatively little on the Wisdom displayed in it. We look for Wisdom in the realm of Nature; we often read and think of the exquisite skill with which the structure of animals is adapted to the element in which they live, and the functions which they have to fulfil. We look for Wisdom in the devices of the artificer, and the works of human authors. But those things which Angels desire to look into, that Scheme for the salvation and sanctification of Man, in which the highest order of created intelligences find matter for adoring contemplation; this the wise man after the flesh often turns away from, with an utter lack of interest, as if there were here no scope for the exercise of the Understanding.

* 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7.

Amazing perverseness ! which Angelic Beings, could scorn find place in their bosoms, would contemplate with some of that contemptuous pity which we bestow upon a little child, when, impatient of some sweet harmony that ravishes the ear, of some glowing harangue which captivates the mind of its elders, it turns away to amuse itself with the jingling of its toys, and the prattle of its playfellows.

The absurdity of man's backwardness to ponder and study the Wisdom of God, as exhibited in the Scheme of Redemption, is enhanced by the fact that this strange reluctance is partially founded in pride. There is a barrier beyond which the creature's shallow capacity cannot penetrate, when studying the procedures of Divine Grace. Some truths refuse to be reconciled even by our subtlest logic; some are only apprehensible up to a certain point, where we lose sight of them, and they soar above our heads into the clouds of mystery. This barrier chafes and frets the pride of the human intellect. Man is for encroaching with his vain speculations on every ground where Angels fear to tread, and loves not to have it said to a reason, whose reaches he vainly imagines to be infinite, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." No sooner does he find that impassable limits are set to further research, than, with Naaman, he turns and goes away in a rage.

But let me now point out how the Epistles, or

Doctrinal Writings, of the Apostles, unfold the Wisdom or Philosophy of the Scheme of Redemption. The Gospel Narratives record the Great Event on which the entire Scheme hinges—the Death of Christ. The Epistles point out the significance of His Death as a Propitiatory Sacrifice. They explain the reason and necessity of His Death, as that which alone could enable God, consistently with His attributes of Justice, Holiness, and Truth, to save the sinner. They illustrate the nature of the faith which justifies, by referring to examples recorded in the Old Testament Scripture (examples which show clearly that it is a practical principle, lying at the root of all right dispositions towards God),—and thus assign the reason why so much stress should be laid upon Faith, in the matter of man's salvation. They explain the theory of imputed sin and imputed righteousness, teaching us that men are regarded by God, not merely as individuals, but in their corporate capacity also,—that all belong to one of the two great Families, of which Adam and Christ respectively are Covenant Heads and Representatives. They explain also the relation of the Law to the Gospel, and teach us that the Elder Dispensation was a rudimentary discipline, by means of which those who were under it were trained for the understanding and appreciation of Gospel blessings (“The law was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by

faith");* they point out the typical character of the Rites and Ceremonies ordained by Moses, which afforded to the spiritual Jews glimpses of good things to come. They lay down the great principles of Christian Duty, and explain the theory of Christian Holiness, as flowing from, and originating in, the apprehension of Redeeming Love. They point out the constitution and destiny of the Church, teaching us that it exists as an arena for the display of the Sovereign Power of God's Grace, which is able to achieve a moral triumph over the sin, which brought death into the world. They give us to understand, that in the conflict proceeding upon Earth between good and evil, Grace and sin, more is at stake than a certain number of human souls; that a question of God's honour is pending on the conflict,—that honour, which has been assailed by malignant Spirits, and must be vindicated publicly before the Universe of Intelligent Beings.

I might add many more points, in which the Epistles present us with what I may call the rationale of God's proceedings. But I have said enough to prove the case; and I will only add one remark, which seems essential to the completeness of the subject.

The principles of God's dealings in Grace, which it is the province of the Epistles to explain,

* Gal. iii. 24.

do not always admit of being perfectly and fully justified to the feeble capacity of Man. Enough for us, if we are permitted to discern any significance at all in God's arrangements for the salvation of His fallen creature; if we can only see enough to convince us that profoundest principles of Justice and Wisdom underlie the entire scheme. Let us feel assured, from what we know and understand of His proceedings, that God has a *counsel* in all things which He does, although oftentimes it lies hid in the waters so deep, that to track it thither would take us out of our depth. If a father should explain to his children the principles on which he was conducting their education, to some of them, doubtless, what he said would be entirely devoid of meaning; by the most intelligent it would only be partially understood. But the fact of their failing to *perceive* the wisdom of the plan, so far from proving it to be devoid of wisdom, is what we should naturally expect beforehand, from the limited nature of a child's capacity. And in like manner, God's ways being not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts, it is not to be expected that our reason, even when enlightened by the Holy Spirit,—much less when not so enlightened,—should always be able to follow and justify the principles of His dealings with us.

Finally, Reader, I would warn you, as the appropriate close of a Chapter, whose topic has

been the enlightening of the human understanding, that in order to grow in the knowledge of Divine Truth, it is necessary to embody in our practice that knowledge whereto we have attained. Who is there that is acting up to his knowledge, that is faithful to his convictions of duty? To him shall the promise be fulfilled, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself."* But alas! how lamentably is the practice of all of us behind our knowledge; for which reason it is that we seem to stand still in our heavenward course, making no solid attainment, no sure advance, as time goes on, and opportunities fly past us. Period after period rapidly draws towards its close; and the conscience of each one amongst us knows how little, within this period, we have improved in the graces of the Christian character. Lord, stir us up to translate into our practice that knowledge of Thy Will, whereunto we have already attained; so that Thou, who dost graciously discipling us by Thy Word and Spirit, mayest lead us on to higher discoveries, and deeper apprehensions,—mayest lead us out of the dim mist and chill night-dews of lukewarmness and indifference, which at present hang about us and obstruct our spiritual sight, into the transparent sunlight of Thy Truth, and the genial fervour of Thy Love.

* John vii. 17.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ADAPTATION OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION TO THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE HUMAN IMAGINATION.

"Sanctify them through thy Truth : thy Word is Truth."—
JOHN xvii. 17.

Recapitulation—Present discussion confined to the moral and spiritual uses of the Book of Revelation—Reasons for believing that it has a moral as well as a prophetical significance—But few can understand the latter—Scripture asserts a moral character for the whole of itself—The great moral influence exercised by the Imagination, especially in youth—Successful appeals to the Imagination by the Church of Rome—and what they argue—The depravation of the faculty shown in its tendency to fasten upon fictions—the relation in which a Romance stands to Human Life—Some of the sublime scenes enumerated, which the Revelation presents to the Imagination—Christ Glorified the Central Figure—The reality of those Visions—the moral influence they are calculated to exercise—Why St. John is called the Divine, and in what sense all should be Divines—Conclusion.

HAVING pointed out a threefold division of that part of the Word of God with which as Christians we are most concerned, into the Historical Books (or Gospels and Acts), the Doctrinal Books (or Epistles), and the Book of Revelation ; and having

observed that there is a power, principle, or faculty of Man's Moral Nature, corresponding to each branch of this threefold division (that Nature being made up of the Affections, the Understanding, and the Imagination), and having further shown how the Gospels are adapted to sanctify, or purify, the Affections of the human heart, and how the Epistles are adapted to enlighten the Understanding on the subject of Christian Doctrine; we now proceed to point out how the Book of ~~Revelation~~ is adapted to purify the Imagination, and thus to exhibit the moral and spiritual use of this sublime portion of the Word of God.

1. Let it be distinctly understood that we are speaking *only* of its moral and spiritual uses. The work has other and more important uses, all consideration of which, however, we waive on the present occasion, as not bearing upon our immediate subject, the *Devotional* Study of Holy Scripture. The Revelation is evidently a great piece of Prophecy, and probably predicts the fortunes of Christ's Church even to the time of the end. But with its prophetic significance we have nothing to do at present. We confine ourselves to its moral and spiritual significance.

One great reason for believing that the Revelation *has* a moral significance over and above its prophetic character, is that, on the contrary hypothesis, it is, and must remain, to the great

majority of Christians, a dead letter. In an ordinary congregation, not one person probably out of every fifty is competent, in point of learning and education, to study, much less to comprehend, its prophetical significance ; and even supposing them competent to the study, scarcely one out of every hundred possesses leisure or materials for its prosecution. Indeed, so numerous and so arduous are the qualifications required, not only in an expositor of this Book, but even in one who would become a judge and critic of existing expositions, that (*if the work have only a prophetical significance*) it were certainly wiser and better, for the great mass of the Christian World, not to meddle at all with its perusal. And to this most mistaken conclusion a large proportion of those who read the Scriptures with a simple view to edification, do, in reality, seem to have come. There are comparatively few, I fear, who have done so much as honour this portion of God's Word with one attentive perusal, such as might give them a general acquaintance, if not with its meaning, yet at least with its outline and contents. But can this course of proceeding be at all justified upon reflection ? Granting this book (as we all do grant it) to be a portion of God's Inspired Word, what says the Scripture respecting itself and its own uses ? " *All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness."* Does not this text clearly assert that a moral use attaches to the entire Volume of Scripture; that *all* Books of the Sacred Canon are adapted to the spiritual cleansing of man's corrupt nature, and will prove to every humble and devout student an instrument of Sanctification? I proceed now to explain the method in which the Book of Revelation, even where its prophetical significance cannot in the least be understood, may exercise this happy and healthful influence upon the mind.

2. Its great moral use consists, I believe, in this, that it is adapted to fill the Imagination with sublime imagery,—imagery which is not the creation of the human brain, but has certain divine and heavenly Realities corresponding to it.

Does any one doubt that the Imagination is a moral power; that it has great effect upon the moral character; great influence in determining the will either for good or evil? Is it not through deceitful pictures presented to the Imagination, of the treasures of delight which this world has in store,—pictures so artfully contrived, as to conceal the thorn, while they exhibit the fragrant and delicately coloured petals of the rose,—that the Devil succeeds in persuading the youthful mind to devote itself to the pursuit of worldly vanity and sinful pleasure? Will not the conscience of all

the young respond to me, when I say that the Imagination is the avenue whereby evil passes into the heart; that if we could but keep the chambers of Imagery pure—pure as they were in the days of our childhood, when we lisped our prayer at the knee of our mothers—pure as in the days of our earliest boyhood, ere yet we had breathed the atmosphere of school, and received there our initiation into the knowledge of sin,—Reader, will not your conscience respond to me, when I say, that if this could be effected, by the power of God's Spirit, and by the use of God's Word, half the battle would be won, and victory over sin would become comparatively easy? And, if further proof be needed of the point, who knows not that the gratification of the Imaginative Faculty, which the Church of Rome provides in her Ritual and Offices,—the poetry with which she invests religion, and seeks to make it amiable in the eyes of the ardent and enthusiastic,—has had a mighty influence in winning for her, and devoting to her cause, converts from a pure faith and a Scriptural form of Religion? The understanding of these most unhappy persons has been hoodwinked by her artifices; and if you examine into the real ground of their allegiance to her, you will find it in the poetical beauty of her system, which carries away the mind into submission to her authority, wherever the Imaginative Faculty is allowed too free a scope, and not held in check

by the counterbalancing powers of Judgment and Reflection.

3. Let us now say a few words upon the diseased state of the Imaginative Faculty by nature, that we may the more clearly discern what remedies are necessary for the counteraction of the disease, and how the Word of God applies such remedies.

The defect of this faculty, then, in its best natural state (for I am not now speaking of its worst state, in which it is made the avenue of introducing evil into the heart), is its tendency to fasten upon fictions. The Affections of man, by nature, engage themselves with unsatisfying objects. The Understanding naturally contemplates the subjects which pass before it under false lights, and so is duped. The Imagination soars not by nature among the sublimities of a higher sphere of existence (which is its legitimate province, when rightly directed), but amidst unrealities derived by abstraction from the experience of every-day life. And this statement requires a little explanation.

The favourite food of the Imagination is a work of Romance. I say of Romance rather than of Poetry, because Romance is of the essence of Poetry, metre and rhyme being only its accidental ornaments. Now what is a work of Romance? It is a fictitious narrative, composed by abstraction (a process of the author's mind) from what really occurs. Human Life, if it be considered in its

ordinary course, is a dull and plodding routine of occupations and amusements, whose uniformity is the rule, while the passages of interest constitute the exception. But, insipid as Life is to one who comes close up to it, and meddles with its trivial passages, there is in all, even in its humblest forms, an undersong of Poetry, which makes itself heard to those who listen for it, as it were from a distance, just as the sound of chiming bells, which the ear detects as untrue when close beneath the bell turret, is mellowed into harmony, if it come to us across wooded copse, and sheets of water, and green pasture-land. Now the province of Romance is to abstract from Human Life this its poetical element, to seize its salient points of character and incident, to omit and abridge all the mechanical and routine passages intervening between the salient points, and to weave these points into an artificial plot. The result is a representation of Life, which, if not untrue in the sense of unnatural, is at least such as never was, and never will be, realized. And accordingly, our feeling in turning again to our daily pursuits, after the perusal of such works, is one of disappointment. It is as if we woke from a beautiful and pleasant dream, to grapple once more with the mechanical routine of our ordinary occupations.

Such is the species of gratification which, in its natural unrenewed state, the Imaginative Faculty seeks for itself. But what is the gratification

which God provides for it in His Word? In the Book of Revelation He opens to us the sublimities of a higher sphere of existence,—a sphere where sin and sorrow are unknown,—a sphere, of whose glories and blessedness our conceptions will always fall short, exalt them how we may. The simple and humble man of heart takes up the Book, and there he reads of an Awful Form, seated on the Throne which has been prepared from everlasting,—a Form, which is to look upon as a jasper and a sardine stone; of twenty-four elders clothed in white raiment, who cast down their golden crowns before the firmamental sea of crystal, above which this Throne is set; of a great multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who having washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb, stand before the Throne with palms (the emblems of achieved victory) in their hands; of jubilant harpers singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb; of a new Heaven and a new Earth, where there is no more curse, no more night, no more sea, no more death; of a Celestial City, whose light is like unto a stone most precious, and wherein is seen no Temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it.

And what is the Central Figure, around which all this blessedness and this glory is grouped? It is the Figure of Him who once trod upon this Earth, veiling the glories of His Godhead beneath

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the form of a servant, and under a shroud of flesh and blood. But He is no longer the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He is no longer compassed about with the infirmities which flesh is heir to; no longer pillows His shelterless head upon the rugged mountain steep, nor sits in languor and exhaustion upon Jacob's well. He hath put off His work-day apparel, and hath arrayed Himself in His robes of royalty. And a glimpse of Him in this array is afforded to us by the Inspired Seer in Patmos. "I was in the Spirit," he says, "on the Lord's Day, and behold One like unto the Son of Man, whose head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters."* The various visions, to which I have made allusion, all express a state of things, which either is at present realised in the world of spirit, and only shrouded from us by the veil of sense, or else which will be realised in the world of Glory.

These are no baseless dreams of the poet, to which nothing can be found in actual matter of fact that will correspond; no creations of a fervid brain, or an highly-wrought fancy. And yet how can the most gorgeous fancy go beyond the portraiture of this Book, in imagining to itself the

* Rev. i. 10, 13—15.

bright, the beautiful, and the sublime? Here we have Truth, pure Truth, outstripping Fiction, even when Fiction is invested in her most glowing colours, and soars upon her sublimest wing. And can we doubt that Truth here also, as in the other departments of God's Word, has a sanctifying efficacy? Can we doubt that the glories of the spiritual world, when made to pass before the eyes of a mind which is disciplined by the Spirit of God, will have the blessed effect of purifying the Imaginative Faculty; yea, of strengthening its wing, and rendering it competent to higher flights? The Imagery of Heaven once admitted to full possession of the mind, will gradually make the Imagery of Earth (however bright and beautiful) to wane, even as artificial lights pale their ineffectual fire before the golden dawn of the morning.

I trust it has now been satisfactorily shown, that in order to derive much benefit from the Book of Revelation, it is not necessary to have an understanding of its prophetic signification. We shall not have missed of the blessing which is solemnly annexed to the reading and hearing the words of the Book of this Prophecy, if, in the course of our perusal of it, we have caught glimpses—it may be, dim and mysterious glimpses—of heavenly blessedness, hereafter to be realised, and of that Divine Person, who opened the gates of Heaven to all believers,—glimpses such as stir in

us more fervent aspirations after spiritual good, and urge us forward on our pilgrimage with better hope and heartier energy. Even so the wayworn traveller catches, through tangled branches, the pinnacles and spires of the city to which he is bound, and cheered by the momentary and disjointed vision, presses on towards it with elastic step and buoyant heart.

The Book is entitled the *Revelation of St. John the Divine*. And truly is the Seer of Patmos deserving of that name,—a name which has since received a degenerate (I had almost said a degraded) application to persons learned in the documents of Religion. We cannot all be divines in the modern and inferior sense of that term. But all of us may be so in its higher and more exalted sense. We may all of us,—most especially the young and comparatively pure,—we may all of us, under the discipline of God's Spirit, see deep into the realities of the spiritual world. We may all of us apprehend and contemplate by faith those Resurrection Glories of the Saviour, which John apprehended with the eye of the body. We may all of us, and the youngest and purest most easily, have opened to us such glimpses of the blessedness of Christ's people, as shall make us long to be with Him where He is.

And if such be the influence, which, under God's Grace, steals forth upon our minds from

the perusal of this Book, who shall deny that it has taken its due effect within us; who shall deny that the Lord's prayer for His disciples has received an answer in our experience; "Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth"?

CHAPTER X.

THE NECESSITY OF THE SECRET TEACHING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."—1 Cor. ii. 11.

One man a stranger to the internal processes of the mind of another—The whole mind never revealed even to the most intimate friend—consequent misapprehensions of the real character of one another—the Holy Spirit or Divine Consciousness must be transferred into our consciousness, before we can apprehend Divine Truth—Comparison of the Scriptures to a sun-dial, and of the Spirit to Light—Guidance of both the Word and the Spirit recognised in the Psalms as essential—and in the Collect for St. John the Evangelist's day—Necessity of the Spirit's teaching illustrated—The imaginative faculty necessary to enable us to appreciate Poetry—The serenity of the writings of the Evangelists—its marvellousness under their circumstances—A man under the influence of party spirit unable to appreciate these writings, because his frame of mind is irreceptive of their tone—The same argument applied to the Psalms—Bear in mind that 1. The operation of the Spirit cannot be distinguished from that of the mental faculties, because He acts through them—2. That the individual teaching of the Holy Ghost does not interfere with the necessity of Human Instruction, both the written and the preached Word being instruments through which the Spirit conveys instruction—The study of the Holy Scriptures supplies a test of religious character—Conclusion. ◆

"WHAT man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" We live outside of one another. We are, to a very great extent, strangers to what passes in the breast of other men.

"Not e'en the dearest heart, and next our own,
Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh."

Each heart is a world to itself; has its own cycle, lives in its own sphere, of joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, interests and counsels, fancies and apprehensions. By sympathy is meant *general* similarity of tastes,—a general interest in one another, subsisting between two persons and leading them to comparatively free communications. I say, *comparatively* free; for even to the dearest and most confidential of friends we should shrink from absolutely revealing our *whole* inward being. We naturally recoil from leaving on the mind of another an impression which would be so disagreeable,—from representing ourselves in the unamiable light of naked, simple, unreserved Truth; we suppress in the depths of our own consciousness the thought of conceit, and self-glorification, the secret desire of impurity, the secret delight in an enemy's calamity, the secret gratification in our own importance, the secret pride which cloaks itself under an expression of humility. Only the fairer parts of us ever come abroad: these more intimate senti-

ments, which are harboured in the cabinet of the consciousness, are communicated absolutely to no one. And, as with our worst feelings, so it is, more or less, with every thing which really touches us. How deeply, or how slightly, the ordinary sources of joy and sorrow affect us, none but ourselves really know. A man has a great loss in his family,—is bereaved of some dear friend or near relative. “What a blow to him!” say his friends; “how will he ever recover it?” Probably it ought to be a blow; but we live outside of him, and who can tell whether it is really so, at least to the extent which we imagine? After all, it may touch him, for divers little reasons, but superficially. While some wayward turn in life’s affairs, some malignant innuendo, some very trifling anxiety, may find him far more sensitive, and make a much deeper impression on his soul. His consciousness is not revealed to us, and we are, therefore, much in the dark respecting his true sentiments. “The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.” *

Now our text teaches us, that as no one man is acquainted with the consciousness of another man, even so the things of God—His counsels, thoughts, ways of viewing men and actions, objects of complacency and aversion,—“even so

* Prov. xiv. 10.

the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." The Holy Spirit, or Third Person in the Blessed Trinity, is to God, what consciousness is to man. The Holy Spirit is, if I may so express myself with reverence, God's Consciousness, God's Innermost Being, God's Mind.

The consciousness of one man cannot be made over or transferred to another. Your consciousness and mine are separated and apart: they cannot be mingled or identified. But God's Consciousness may, by an act of Divine Power, be transfused into, and blended with the consciousness of His creatures: so that His Mind shall truly and really become their mind, His sentiments their sentiments, His interests their interests, His counsels their counsels.

And until this transference of the Spirit of God into the spirit of man is made, we live outside of God. We may hear the echoing thunder of His judgments, when they are abroad in the world; we may have the examples of His mercy and the monuments of His wrath before our eyes; the still small voice of His gracious invitations may be addressed to us; the letter of Holy Scripture may be familiar to us from our youth upward as a household word; and from these aids we may form some general conjectures as to the Divine Character: but to God's own thought and counsel we must remain strangers, until the Holy Spirit initiates us into it intrinsically, by the communi-

cation of the Divine mind unto the mind of the creature.

The Scripture, then, cannot be deeply and perfectly understood, except by the guidance of the same Mind which inspired it. It is an *outward* Revelation of God, and we need, in order to make it plain, an *inward* Revelation also. The Scripture resembles a sun-dial, which is in itself perfect and complete, graven with all the hours, and with a gnomon which casts an exact shadow. But the indispensable condition of the sun-dial's usefulness, is Light. On a cloudy day, in the twilight, and at midnight, the sun-dial avails not to inform us of the time. Even so the Scripture is "able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." It is the chart of the road to Glory, on which every shoal, and beacon, and light-house, every sounding, every latitude and longitude, is marked with unerring accuracy. But the one indispensable condition of the Scripture's answering its end is, that the Spirit, while we read it, shall be shining in upon the heart. Without such shining, the Word itself must be a dead letter to us,—a barren series of doctrines and principles, without beauty and significance.

The Psalmist recognises this doctrine, when he prays, "O send out Thy Light and Thy Truth ; that they may lead me." He does not say "Thy Light" simply ; that would be to lose sight of the Word of Truth ; nor does he say "Thy Truth"

simply: that would be to lose sight of the Light of the Spirit; but he exclaims, "O send out Thy Light AND Thy Truth, that they may lead me, and bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling." Both are equally matters of necessity. In exact conformity with which Scripture, our Church on St. John the Evangelist's Day teaches us to pray thus, "Merciful Lord, we beseech Thee to cast Thy bright beams of light" (there is the light of the Spirit) "upon Thy Church, that it, being enlightened by the doctrine of Thy blessed Apostle and Evangelist Saint John" (there is the Sun-dial of the Word), "may so walk in the light of Thy Truth, that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Here is a Body of Divinity in a few short lines. The necessity of the Light of the Spirit. The necessity of the Light of the Word. The necessity of conducting ourselves according to these Lights. And finally, the Light at the close of such a career, which is the Light of Glory. The man who wrote that Collect, knew something about Heaven and the way to reach it.

The doctrine, that we can only enter into the Scripture by that Spirit under whose Inspiration it was written, is not only clearly stated in Revelation; it rests also upon most obvious grounds of Reason.

Without some kind of sympathy with the mind of a poet,—without the poetical turn, as it is

called, it would be impossible to appreciate Poetry. And each distinct species of Poetry can only be so far understood, and its significance only so far discerned, by the reader, as he finds in himself some taste for it. The literature may stimulate the taste, but there must exist a taste in the first instance, as the essential condition, the necessary basis, upon which all right apprehension of the poem must be built. And so it is with other classes of literature.

It would not, then, be consonant even with Reason, to expect that the Holy Scriptures should be exempted from the operation of a law which applies to every other class of literature; that it should be feasible to enter into their significance, without having imbibed something of their spirit in the first instance. I will exemplify this somewhat in detail, by way of making it more apparent.

Take the Mind, which pervades the Holy Gospels—which transpires in every page and in every line of them. Consider what it is. Did you ever make an attempt to realize the wonderfulness of its *serenity*? The perfect serenity with which the Gospels are written, is to me the most striking proof of their Inspiration. Remember that the authors were deeply and personally implicated in the matters which they record. Remember that they had sacrificed every thing to the great cause which they maintain. Remember

that St. Peter (from whom is supposed to have emanated St. Mark's Gospel) and St. John were men of ardent feelings and of the deepest affections. Remember that all the Christians of that day, but especially those who were taken to be ringleaders in the sect of the Nazarenes, were the subject of every species of insult, slight, and persecution, which the combined malice of earth and hell could fling upon them. And then remember what the Gospels are; that they are the plainest of plain narratives (plain even to homeliness), untinted with a single hue of passion; that the writers do not appear in the character of advocates, whose aim is to maintain a cause, and to work up an interest in the hearer by large comments, and fervid declamation on facts; but that they confine themselves to the function of mere witnesses, stating, in a passionless, emotionless way, without note or comment, what took place, extenuating nothing in their own party, and setting down nought in malice against their antagonists, mentioning their own faithlessness and the denial of St. Peter, equally with the good traits of Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Gamaliel; and it then becomes apparent that, in order to enable them to write thus, the minds of the writers must have been lifted up above the storms and clouds of passion and prejudice, into that pure and serene Light, which enables us to deserv all objects in their right and undistorted

proportions,—the Light of Truth, or in other and better words, the Light of God.

Now I will suppose a man, with a large portion of enthusiasm in his constitution, abandoning himself to party spirit in some noble cause, where great interests are at stake. He is zealous for what he conceives to be justice and right, and herein he does well (Gallionism and indifferentism is a most unchristian state of mind), but in his zeal he loses sight of Love, and occasionally (from want of watchfulness) allows himself to overstep the bounds of truth and candour. He deals in exaggerated statements, hot intemperate expressions; he imputes motives; he judges measures rather by the men that advocate them, than by their intrinsic merits. In this state of mind he would relish keenly the pointed sarcasms, and brilliant antithesis, of a profane historian; he might kindle into enthusiasm, as Clarendon describes the sorrows of a discrowned and persecuted Sovereign; every clever invective launched by the press against the views or character of his opponents, would fan the flame of his enthusiasm; but when, after a day's haranguing, agitation, and excitement, he retires to rest, if he sees the Holy Scriptures on his shelf, and the thought of devotional exercises crosses him, how will he feel disposed towards the Gospels? Is it not manifest that he is in a frame of mind utterly irreceptive of the Holy Literature; that his eyes may wander

over the page, and his mind take in the facts of the narrative, and yet that the whole shall be a sealed book to him, because his present mood of mind is so alien from the spirit of the writer? Is it not manifest that the plain, tintless narrative, so far from unveiling to him its unrivalled grace and majesty, will be distasteful to him because there is nothing in it which meets his present sentiments; that he will secretly say of it as the Israelites, who lusted after flesh, said of the manna, "Our soul loatheth this light food"? Yet, like the manna, God's Word is a pure and heavenly viand, and has its relish for a pure and simple taste.

And similarly with the Psalms. The Psalms, as we have said, are songs of the Religious Affections. If a man knows not what religious affections are; if his hopes and fears, and joys and sorrows, have relation only to this world; if he has never endeavoured to lead a spiritual life, and so is a stranger to the fluctuations of spiritual feeling; if he has never experienced the delightfulness of prayer, and distress at being baffled in the attempt to pray, it is of course an impossibility that he can enter into the significance of Sacred Hymns, whose very design is to give utterance to such feelings. The song of chivalry and secular enterprise, the plaintive sonnet descanting upon earthly hopes, or earthly affections, or earthly dreams of bliss,—these may have for him a strong

spell of fascination. But the condition of his appreciating the Psalms of David, is, that there be in his mind a heavenly and spiritual element,—a principle not of the earth, earthly. And this element and principle is the agency of a person in the mind,—even the agency of the Spirit of the Living God.

In order to guard myself against misapprehension of my meaning, I should observe: First, that the movements of the Holy Spirit cannot be, by those who experience them, distinguished from the natural operations of the mind. You are not to expect, after you have prayed for God's Holy Spirit, any sudden influx of a wonderful light, quite distinct from the ordinary powers of Reflection and Memory. The Holy Spirit acts upon the mind *through* the ordinary mental faculties, not without them, or independently of them. Similarly He acts upon the will *through* the ordinary motives of fear, love, hope, and not independently of them. The two cases are completely analogous. When the testimony of God's wrath against sin is made to any sinner, it is the Holy Spirit who stimulates the ordinary motive of fear in the sinner's heart, and makes it operate upon the testimony. The man is wrought upon in that case by one of the motives which are commonly operative among men; but the motive is set at work by, and receives its peculiar direction from, the Holy Spirit. *Just so it is with the mind.*

When the Spirit enlightens it, He does so through the instrumentality of the ordinary faculties. When after careful, patient thought, or after an effort of the Imagination to realize some Scriptural Narrative in all its details, we find that the difficulties, one after another, begin to clear up, like clouds rolling away from the bosom of a mountain, and revealing patches of verdure smitten with the sunbeam; or when Memory recalls some apposite allusion elsewhere, or some illustrative experience, through which we ourselves have passed, the light so vouchsafed is undistinguishable in our consciousness from that which is supplied by our natural faculties; it is supplied *through* them, they being called into operation and assisted by Grace, whose primary actings are in the abysmal depths of the mind, far beyond the ken of the keenest self-intuition.

Secondly: the fact that to each individual under the New Dispensation is covenanted the teaching of the Holy Ghost to guide him into all truth, does not the least interfere, if rightly understood, with the necessity of human instruction. Human instruction—Preaching in the wide sense of the word—is itself one of the channels through which the Holy Spirit dispenses Truth. Originally there was no other channel. Before the composition and compilation of the Books of the New Testament, men received Divine Truth exclusively through the voice of the Instructor.

If between this fact, and the doctrine that Christians are taught supremely by the Holy Spirit (a doctrine assevered in the strongest sermons in Heb. viii. 11), the Apostles saw no discrepancy, why should we discover a discrepancy at the present day? The fact is, that both the Preached Word and the Written Word are instruments, not originating agents, of instruction. The Teacher in both is the Holy Ghost. Moreover, to be preached to, is to receive the results of another's thinking upon God's Word, and his thoughts are as likely to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit (rather, as the Christian Ministry is a Divine Institution, honoured and blessed of God, far more likely to be so enlightened) than our own. In saying therefore, that Christians are to search the Scriptures for themselves, with prayer for guidance into all truth, we by no means imply that they may dispense with the instruction of God's ambassadors, or that they must not avail themselves diligently of every human means, from which enlightenment in the knowledge of God may be derived.

Thus, then, we close the consideration of the great subject, which has occupied these pages. God dispose all hearts to adopt the practice, for which they have been designed to furnish helps! And as I am speaking to the young especially, as well as to all generally, I will say that this is one of those points of duty which supply us with a

test of character in early life,—which serve while at School to discriminate the godly from the godless boy. The outward form of prayer is so commonly adopted by all, that it has ceased to be a test. I apprehend that now-a-days, in all our Schools (God be praised for it), the entire neglect of private prayer would be visited with the censure and disapprobation of society. Not so, as I understand modern school life, the Study of the Scriptures. The minority only study them; or, at least, only the minority study them daily, prayerfully, and thoughtfully. Therefore, this sort of study will furnish to members of a School, a test of their religious character and attainments; not of course an infallible test, but still one which to him who can pass it, will be fraught with more or less of comfort, in proportion to the depth and reality with which the devotional exercise is performed.

God make us all to know and feel that real peace and solid satisfaction cannot be enjoyed except in Communion with Him; and that such Communion is impossible, except both we address Him, and He address us. And may He address us out of His lively oracles, warning, guiding, encouraging, instructing, comforting us, turning the old archive into a living counsellor, and causing His Word to become to each one amongst us His Voice.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PLAN OF A MEDITATION.

"God . . . whom I serve with my spirit."—ROMANS i. 9.

A complete specimen of a Meditation is one which calls into exercise all the powers of the mind, the Imagination, the Memory and Understanding, the Affections, and the Will—The relative importance of these exercises stated—Objection arising from the difficulty of Meditation answered.

It is thought well to subjoin to the preceding little treatise the plan of a Meditation on Holy Scripture, such as we have recommended.

But lest, in giving the full detail of such a plan, I should discourage or terrify any reader, by seeming to exact more than he can give, let me say at the outset, that as it is with the money, so it is also with the leisure which is at our disposal. God requires us to give to the extent of our ability, and not beyond our ability. We are about to furnish a general framework upon which meditations may be constructed, not a model to which we are to tie ourselves down in a slavish and scrupulous spirit. And be it remembered that, as was suggested in a former Chapter, many hours of

solitude not spent in our closets, yet in which our thoughts are free, may be profitably devoted to this exercise. A solitary walk may frequently be applied in this manner, when no other time can well be found. The freedom from interruption, and presence of Nature, furnished by a walk, are both of them helps to the mind in the performance of such a work.

First,—Endeavour to realize the Presence of God, or of Jesus Christ, according to that conception of this great Truth which best suits your own mind. Do not be long about it, or get the mind into tangles and curious questions, as to the *method* of God's Presence. A simple, lively remembrance will suffice. He is here. That is certain. That is enough.

Secondly,—Call upon God, as an essential condition of success, to inspire you with holy thoughts and to bless them to your spiritual profit and growth in grace, for CHRIST's sake. This too is to be done very briefly; but, as every thing depends upon it, with great earnestness. As you would act with a friend who is just quitting you, throwing your whole soul into one parting injunction, or one parting request, which you whisper in his ear as he is turning his back,—employ even such brevity and such earnestness, in urging your suit to the High and Holy One.

Thirdly,—Open the passage of Scripture which is to form the subject of the Meditation; or, if

you have it in your memory, repeat it mentally. It would be well to choose it the day before ; or let it choose itself by coming in order. Take the simple, and avoid the difficult, parts of the Bible. The words of Our Lord, His Parables, His Miracles, the narratives of the Infancy and the Passion, are all sufficiently simple, and all (especially the Passion) full of profit. Take any of these ; and choose (ordinarily) not more than a single verse.

Fourthly,—The Bible (in the original, if you know the language sufficiently well to make it available) being opened at the passage, picture to yourself the circumstances by an effort of the Imagination. This will serve to fix the mind to the point, as falconers tie a hawk on their hand with a jess, when they do not wish to let it fly.

That I may show what a depth of meaning there is in every word of our Lord, as well as to give an example of the practice of meditation, I will suppose the passage chosen to be one of His shortest recorded speeches,—only four words in the English, only three in the Greek, “*Δός μοι πιεῖν,*” “Give Me to drink.”

Before you begin to reflect upon them, picture to yourself the scene with its two interlocutors. A noontide sun glaring down with broad bright eye, in a sultry eastern climate. A well, whose mouth is surrounded by a low wall of masonry, of breadth sufficient to afford a seat, a crane

perhaps, or rude lever stretching over it, to which the bucket is fastened by a rope, for the purpose of letting it down and drawing it up. Our Blessed Lord sitting upon the parapet of the well, and the woman of Samaria standing by, having just shifted her water-jar from her head, on which she had carried it from the city, to her hand, and being about to annex it to the end of the rope. In the background rises Mount Gerizim, crowned by the ruins of the Samaritan Temple, which was destroyed by John Hyrcanus some hundred and sixty years ago, but the broad steps leading up to which are still seen cut out in the rocky side of the mountain. Between this mountain and the speakers, rich rustling fields of ripe grain, upon whose whiteness the breeze brings a shadow-stain when it sweeps across and freshens the ears. Those figures receding in the distant perspective, and nearing the city walls, are the Disciples, gone to purchase provisions. Close to the well stands a palm-tree, which, with its overarching feather-like leaves, makes a pleasant shade over the parapet; and, besides this, the figures in the foreground are sheltered from the sunstroke by a large overhanging turban, which throws into shadow not only the brow, but the entire face.—To picture all this to oneself is a work of the Imagination, or perhaps of the Fancy. It is entirely preliminary and subservient to the great business

of the Meditation; yet it is not to be despised, both for the reason I have named, that it serves as a means of tying down the mind, and also because we thus yield to Almighty God the homage of our Imagination, which is an important faculty of the mind.

Fifthly,—The circumstances having been pictured, next comes the exercise of the Understanding upon the words. We reflect upon them, turn them over in the mind, endeavour to make out what they teach, what doctrine is wrapped up in them, and what duty. Upon the words, “Give Me to drink,” as falling from Our Lord’s lips, the following reflections might arise. They show how perfectly Christ was partaker of our human nature, in all those infirmities of it which do not involve sin. He can understand these infirmities, and sympathize with them, as having personally experienced them.—Again, we remember that He virtually asked for drink on another occasion, when upon the Cross He cried, “I thirst.” What a contrast between the two occasions! Here He sits at ease, reposing Himself. There every limb is strained and racked. Here it is only the heat of the sun, and His foot-sore journey, which has caused discomfort. There it is the torture, both of the posture and of the nails, which sends an agony through the whole of that Sacred Frame. Hereupon we may take occasion to reflect how trifling are the petty

discomposures of this life, while we have our health,—the little crosses, frets, and rubs, of which some petulant persons make so heavy a burden,—compared with the racking pain of some pining patient, like Hezekiah, of whom God makes an end from morning to night.—Lastly: what an honour to be asked to give drink to Our Lord! what a distinction to do Him the slightest service, even to the unloosing of the latchet of His sandal! But are we sure that He never asks for drink at our hands? Rather we are sure that He often does so. When the poor Christian asks for a drink, it is Jesus asking through him. And if we feed the poor Christian in His Name, He will recognize this as a service done to Himself, when He sits, not upon the well, but upon the judgment-seat. To *us* the King will then say: “I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat; *I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink.*” How closely then must the Christian poor,—yea, and all Christian men, be united to Our Lord, if, when we feed them, we feed Him! Yes, they are as closely united to Him, as the limbs are to the head. Just as when a surgeon binds up a broken arm, he does not say, “I shall relieve this arm,” but “I shall relieve this sufferer,”—so, when we minister to the Christian poor, it is not so much the member of Christ to which we minister, as Christ Himself.

Many other thoughts might suggest them-

selves; but these are enough, and even more than enough, for one day. You see that they form a little Sermon, preached by oneself to oneself, in order to the edification of one's own heart. And let me add, that if all Christians would faithfully and duly preach to their own hearts these little sermons, there would be comparatively little need for the lengthened discourses of ministers. It is chiefly to supply the general (but sinful) lack of service in this respect, that we grind for our congregations every Sunday, and present to them after they have passed through the mill of our own understandings, those truths of God's Holy Word, which it would be far better and healthier for them that they should grind for themselves.

Sixthly,—The Understanding and the Memory having done their work in reflections upon the passage, next follows the exercise of the Affections and the Will,—incomparably the most important part of the whole meditation. In this consists the practical application of the little Sermon to your own heart,—in the absence of which it is useless, or, in some respects, worse than useless. Remember that you are not to look at these truths with a barren admiration, but to turn them to account in the guidance of your soul. First, then, endeavour so to present them to your mind, that they may stir feelings and affections in your heart, whether of hope, or fear, or

gratitude, or love. It will be a good plan, though not to be too mechanically adhered to, to allow any feeling, which thus stirs within you, to express itself in Prayer. As for example: on observing from the text, that Christ partook of the innocent infirmities of our nature, try to affect your heart vividly with the truth, that there is *sympathy* in the love which God has for you. It is not merely a sublime pity, from the lofty elevation of which He looks down upon you and compassionates your case, but a tender fellow-feeling which He entertains for you, in virtue of the Incarnation. Let your heart then breathe forth articulately some such sentiment towards Him as this: "Everlasting Father, how great is Thy tenderness, Who in all my afflictions art Thyselv afflicted!" Think of your peculiar trials,—trials, possibly, which no heart but your own is privy to,—and consider at what particular period of Our Lord's career He entered upon the experience of trials similar in character.—Again: remembering that on the judgment-seat He will notice, and reward, the cup of cold water given in His name to a disciple, think how far He could truly say of you, "I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink;" how far you have justly exposed yourself to such a charge, not perhaps by hardheartedness, when misery was thrown across your road (that is the fault of very few), but by neglecting to step out of your way to

look for it. These sentiments of the heart should be concluded by an exercise of the Will, that is, by one or more Resolutions.

The Resolutions formed upon the thoughts which I have suggested above, would be such as these: To do some definite act of kindness to one of the Christian Poor, under the persuasion that it is Christ in him, who solicits relief at our hands; or to take sweetly and cheerfully the little crosses of life, esteeming them "light affliction, which is but for a moment," in comparison with what Our Lord underwent for us.

Throughout the whole process, both of Thought and Affection, it is to be remembered that if any particular sentiment be more acceptable to the mind than another, it should be pursued without let or hindrance, even though the prosecution of it should leave no space for other sentiments. One holy thought, imbibed by the Understanding, blossoming in the Affections, and bearing fruit in the Will, is far better than many scattered over the surface of the mind's soil, and never taking deep root. Let the rule be, then, never to check the mind, when it is warm and interested, but to give it free rein. Alas! its warmth of interest in things divine and spiritual is so rare,—we have so much more frequently to deplore its deadness,—that, when its sympathies are really touched, we cannot afford not to indulge them; we must even follow on where they lead.

“Quench not the Spirit,” says the Apostle; and let us remember that any holy sentiment, which swells and expands in the mind, is the result of God’s gracious Inspiration. Check not the growth and development of that sentiment; for God designs it to bring forth fruit. The only caution which this principle requires to be appended to it is, that edification, not speculation, is the great end of this Religious Exercise. When I speak, therefore, of giving reins to the mind, I do not mean giving reins to its curiosity, so that it may pursue speculative questions, but rather giving reins to any devout sentiment, so that it may make a further inroad upon the heart.

The Meditation is to be concluded by briefly confessing before God, that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,” and imploring Him to pardon for His Son’s sake the iniquities which cleave to our holiest things; by beseeching Our Lord to intercede for us, and to perfume our sin-defiled services with the sweet incense of His Intercession; and finally, by solemnly offering our good Affections and Resolutions to God through Christ, and imploring Him to bless and strengthen them. The whole is closed by the Lord’s Prayer.

It has been recommended also, before quitting the subject altogether, to pick out some one sentiment which has pleased us most, and to charge the memory with it during the remainder of the

day, so that it may continually be recalled to mind at intervals, and be like a fragrant flower, plucked from the garden and worn in the girdle, whose odour refreshes us amid the dust and turmoil of life. This last is the precept of the devout St. François de Sales, whose method of meditation we have followed in this Chapter.

I have aimed at presenting, in as short a compass as I could, a *perfect* specimen of a Meditation on Scripture. By perfect I mean one which, however ordinary and commonplace the thoughts may be, calls into exercise every power of the mind. In meditation the whole mind should, if possible, be engaged. St. Paul says, in the passage which stands at the head of this Chapter, "I serve God with my spirit,"—with all the faculties, that is, of my higher nature. The Imagination is one of these faculties ; it is exercised, as we see, in preparing for the actual meditation, and picturing the circumstances, to which the text introduces us. The Understanding and the Memory are two other faculties. The understanding reflects upon the passage, and draws from it doctrines and precepts ; the memory contributes to the work, by suggesting other illustrative passages, and by thus enabling us to compare spiritual things with spiritual. The Affections and the Will are the highest of all our faculties, because on these depends the determination of moral character and conduct. The Affections are stirred by holy sentiments drawn

from the passage; the Will makes its particular resolve, that these sentiments shall in some definite form be carried out in practice.

It is certainly desirable (we do not say more) that in each meditation all the faculties of the mind should be exerted. But all are by no means equally essential. That the Affections should be stirred and the Will roused, this is indeed indispensable. The exercise of the Understanding is important, but not equally important with that of the Affections; we need not be solicitous about new ideas or brilliant thoughts; plain homespun reflections are quite enough. The Imagination ranks lowest in point of importance. Its exercise often may be, nay, sometimes must be, dispensed with. Thus, if a Proverb of Solomon were chosen as a subject of meditation, there are no circumstances to be pictured to ourselves, and so no scope for the Imagination.

In conclusion, it may be thought that we have sketched out a duty, which theoretically wears the aspect of being easy, but practically is full of difficulties. Some reader perchance may reason thus on what has been brought before him: "I understand the method of Meditation, as you explain it; but I feel that I shall make nothing of it, if I try. You choose your own passage, upon which to found your explanation; and therefore you take care to choose one, which shall offer some easy and obvious thoughts. What must I

do, when I come to a knotty passage, which seems to defy all endeavours to extract some wholesome lesson from it? Then again, you seem to speak as if my mind were so easily and immediately under my control, that I could apply it to imagining, thinking, remembering, desiring, and resolving, all in the space of a quarter of an hour. But these things are not so in fact. The dull, prosaic, every-day reality is that my mind, when I would pray, is either stupid and heavy, or, if quick and lively, it is volatile, and cannot easily be pinned down to that which is before it. I lack two things, which stand in the way of my complying with your recommendations;—a fruitful subject, and a mind having such a mastery of self and such a mastery of Scripture, as to avail myself of it."

Well, I entirely sympathize with the objection, and feel the full force of it, quite as keenly as the reader can do. But I tell you, in answer, Begin on the plan I have given you, and try your best. You will fail and fail over and over again; but a gradual and sure success will be realized ere long. Can we really think that the accomplishment of an ancient language is to be acquired only by grappling with its rudiments, and through blunders manifold, but that the life of Practical Piety can be attained without effort, by listening to a few Sermons, submitting ourselves passively to a few good impressions, and lazily wishing that we were better than we are? Many are the special

counsels of Practical Piety which seem to one, who for the first time makes experiment of them, as hopeless and impracticable as the art of skating does to a beginner. But we know that a man, who determines to skate, and perseveres in the attempt, always ends by skating; and ultimately the exercise becomes an instinct with him, which no intermission of it can make him forget. In calling the human mind to meditate upon Divine Truth, we are calling it to a slippery and arduous task. But, if it be firmly set to prosecute this exercise, it will find the everlasting arms of Grace underneath it, ministering support, and "the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees," shall be strengthened by a Power from on high, to achieve a journey whose goal is nothing less than the union of the soul with God.

It is thought that it will assist the reader in practically carrying out the suggestions made in this volume, if some Sketches of Meditations on various parts of Holy Scripture are subjoined. In drawing up these sketches, we shall keep our eye upon the ground-plan laid down in the last Chapter, but not in such a manner as to be bound servilely by it, or any other technical rules. The mind should always accommodate itself to the passage with which it has to deal.

SKETCHES OF MEDITATIONS
ON VARIOUS PARTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

MEDITATION I.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

TEXT.—Ps. xvii. 3 : Thou hast probed mine heart : thou hast visited me in the night.

MEMORY.—Notices in other Psalms of exercises of Devotion in the night. God communes with the inmost thoughts at night : Ps. xvi. 7. The song of Praise is offered in the night : Ps. xlvi. 8. God's name is remembered in the night : Ps. cxix. 55.

Instances from Sacred History.

Abram is brought forth abroad by night, and bidden to look towards the numberless stars: Gen. xv. 5.

Samuel receives the prophetical call at night: 1 Sam. iii.

Paul and Silas sing praises in the prison at night : *Acts xvi. 25.*

The Holy Supper instituted at night : *John xiii. 30.*

IMAGINATION.—Natural suitableness of the night season for devotion.—Stillness of the external world.—House of feasting hushed.—The eyes being sealed up by darkness, the mind is thrown in upon self-communing.—People may dissipate thought in the day, but must live with themselves in the night.

UNDERSTANDING.—The text shows night to be a time for self-examination : “Thou hast proved mine heart in the night season.”—The day is past with all its sins and mercies, and we can recur to it in the stillness of the night.

AFFECTIONS.—O God, I thank Thee that Thou hast given us the night, as a rest, not for the body only, but for the mind also. May the night be to me a Sabbath of the Soul! Speak to me out of its stillness,—may I commune with mine own heart on my bed, and search out my spirit.

FINAL RESOLUTION.—To be punctual in evening devotions, and to let self-scrutiny form a part of them.

MEDITATION II.

GOD'S LOVE FOR THE LOWER CREATURES.

TEXT.—*Jonah iv. 11: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein . . . are much cattle?*

MEMORY.—The care of God for animals is declared by Our Lord.—“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.” Matt. x. 29. Again, “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them” Matt. vi. 26.

UNDERSTANDING.—Good men imitate God in His care for the inferior creatures. Jacob says to Esau, “My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me; and if men should over-drive them one day, all the flock will die.” Gen. xxxiii. 13.

In the law it is expressly forbidden to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn; and though St. Paul, in commenting on this precept, asks, “Doth God take care for oxen?” his meaning certainly is, Doth God take care for oxen *only*? i. e., Has He no other end in this precept than the making a provision for the inferior creatures?

IMAGINATION.—Think of the much cattle in the city or country where you are, and try to realize that each of them is an object of care to God.

The mysterious tie arising out of creation binds them to His Heart. The great ones of the earth have no time for the management of lower departments, which are governed by subordinates; but God cares for the small as well as the great, and His Providence is glorified in the humblest departments of His Empire.

AFFECTIONS.—O my God, if Thou art so tender to the beasts that perish, how much more tender shall we expect Thee to be in the nurture and discipline of an immortal soul! How dost Thou care for its wants, sympathize with its sorrows, and hear the cry which its sufferings make to Thee! Of all which Thou dost give us assurance, in that Thou wast made flesh, and didst dwell among us; so becoming a High Priest which could be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; wherefore, O God, let me never doubt or distrust Thy care and love. Write those words of Thine upon mine heart, “Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

RESOLUTIONS.—I. To imitate God’s tenderness in dealing with the inferior creatures, and all dependents.

II. To study God’s love and providential care, as it is manifested in little things.

MEDITATION III.

THE FOLLY OF SELF-CONFIDENCE.

TEXT.—Prov. xxviii. 26: *He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.*

MEMORY AND UNDERSTANDING.—I. A bad man does not suspect the blackness of his own heart (Hazael said, “But what! is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?” 2 Kings viii. 13); and

II. A good man does not suspect the frailty of his own resolutions.

Propose to illustrate the proverb by the fall of St. Peter.

(1.) St. Peter was quite sincere in his attachment to Christ, and quite believed, when he said so, that he was prepared to go with Our Lord to prison and to death. He trusted to his own heart, i. e., to his own natural resolution, firmness, and strength of attachment, without reference to God’s supporting grace.

(2.) See what “a fool” his self-confidence made of him.—He had been warned by Our Lord of his especial danger, had received a prediction of his fall, and had with the other Apostles heard those words, “Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.” But instead of watching and praying with Christ, he slept. When the danger came, his natural courage supported him

at first, and impelled him to cut off the right ear of the High Priest's servant. But it was transient like the lightning flash; not steady and equable like the sunlight. Seeing that Our Lord was not about to defend Himself by the arm of flesh, he forsook Him and fled, and shortly after, by a question from a maidservant, his courage (or "heart") is quite overwhelmed, and he not only denies his Master, but persists in the denial with imprecations. What shame and confusion of face must have been his, when he met the other Apostles that night! He had been the foremost to boast of attachment, and now he had been in the first rank of disloyalty.

AFFECTIONS.—Am I not in the habit of believing of myself the soft things which my own heart whispers, and has some sudden temptation never revealed to me the deceitfulness of my heart in this respect? (Here search the conscience, and compel it to give an answer.) Alas! Lord, in my prosperity I said, I never shall be moved; Thou, Lord, of Thy goodness hast made my hill so strong; but Thou didst turn Thy face from me, and I was troubled. Make me for the future to despair of myself, and to hope only in Thy grace.

RESOLUTIONS.—I. To suspect myself whenever I feel especially secure.

II. Never to disown my connexion with Christian persons and Christian sentiments, when I perceive that they are under the world's frown.

MEDITATION IV.

SOCIAL CHANGES PREPARATORY FOR THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

TEXT.—Ezek. xxi. 27: I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is: and I will give it him.

IMAGINATION.—Think that you are on the high mountain to which Satan led Our Lord, and that all the kingdoms of the earth are shown to you, as they were to Him, in an instant of time; and that while you are looking, each of them dissolves and takes another shape, as if there were no substance, but only show, in all of them.

UNDERSTANDING.—1. There is a principle of decay in all earthly polities, just as in all human bodies there is some organic disease.

2. There is such a thing as absolute right to govern, and it comes of God; but no man, and no body of men, comes up to the true idea of a wise, just, and paternal ruler.

3. In Christ alone is the idea realized. All royalties are shadows of His, and shall one day give place to the substance. “He shall feed us with a faithful and true heart, and rule us prudently with all His power (Ps. lxxviii. 73), judging with righteousness the poor, and reproving with equity for the meek of the earth” (Isa. xi. 4).

AFFECTIONS.—Eternal King, who art to reign

over us for ever, reign in me now by Thy grace; overturn the worldly idols which I have set up in my heart, and establish Thy throne upon their ruins.

RESOLUTION.—In all earthly revolutions, to think of Christ's secure Kingdom which is hastening forward.

MEDITATION V.

THE LIVING SACRIFICE

TEXT.—Rom. xii. 1: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

IMAGINATION.—Picture to yourself the Apostle in the Temple, looking on while the victim is offered on the altar of burnt offering. It passes through his mind, that the Church of God is now outgrowing these bloody sacrifices, which were reasonable (as toys are reasonable) only in a state of childhood; and also that the sacrifice which God requires of us Christians, is no poor dead victim, but a *living* sacrifice.

UNDERSTANDING.—1. “I beseech you by the mercies of God.” The mercy of God, shown to us freely for Christ’s sake, is the groundwork of all exhortations to Christian practice. First re-

ceive this mercy, and then yield yourself to God as a living sacrifice.

2. "To present our bodies a living sacrifice," is the same as "yielding our members servants to righteousness, unto holiness." Rom. vi. 19. Consider the members of the body which must thus be yielded :

(a.) The Eyes. The lust of the eye must be mortified, and the eye employed in reading God's Word, or surveying His works.

(b.) The Ears. We must be "swift to hear" the voice of instruction, and must turn away the ear from temptation and from flattery; see Acts xii. 22, 23.

(c.) The Hands. "Let him that *stole* steal no more: but rather let him *labour, working with his hands* the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Eph. iv. 28.

(d.) The Feet. "I was sick, and ye *visited* me: I was in prison, and ye *came* unto me." Matt. xxv. 36.

(e.) The Mouth. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Eph. iv. 29.

"Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt." Col. iv. 6.

AFFECTIONS.—We have an altar, even the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Upon this altar, which sanctifieth every gift which is laid upon it,

I desire to present my body a living sacrifice. May my self-surrender be complete and unre-served. Behold, Lord, mine eyes to survey Thy glorious works, mine ears to hear Thy Word, mine hands to work the works of God, my feet to walk in the way of Thy commandments, and my mouth to sound forth Thy praise. But my sacri-fice being alone cannot be accepted. Therefore, Lord, I desire to unite it to that of Jesus Christ, which alone is meritorious. Receive it for His sake, and make it daily more and more entire on my part. Amen.

MEDITATION VI.

NO MORE SEA.

TEXT.—Rev. xxi. 1 : And I saw a new heaven and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea.

IMAGINATION.—Read the context, and endeavour to picture to yourself the scene described by St. John.

UNDERSTANDING.—1. Observe that the heavenly state is described by negations. “No sun”—“no moon”—“no night there”—“no temple therein”—“no more sea ;” we being unable to form any positive notion of that state which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.”

2. The sea may be conceived of as a separating barrier. The members of the family of Christ, who here are dispersed over the world, shall there be united ; and hypocrites being expelled from the body of the Church, the Communion of Saints shall shine forth in all its glory.

3. The sea may be conceived of as an emblem of unrest, and of human life, which is restless, full of uncertainty, treachery, and peril. When we have passed the *waves* of this troublesome world, we shall come to the *land* of everlasting life.

4. The sea is an emblem of the wicked. “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” There will be no sin in heaven, and therefore there will be perfect peace there, for it is only sin which breaks peace between God and man, between man and his neighbour, between man and himself.

AFFECTIONS.—1. I go forth in affection towards those who, though absent from me in body, are yet present in spirit, worshipping the same God, and serving the same Saviour as myself, in a different climate, but animated by the same hope of glory. Hasten the day, O Lord, when Thou wilt make up all Thy jewels, collected from the different mines of the earth, into one diadem.

2. I walk upon the waves of a troublesome world. When the winds and the waves rise, I shall be overwhelmed, O Lord, if Thou uphold me

not. Give me grace to look away from all dangers and difficulties unto Thee, and do Thou meet me in my daily life, and walk by my side.

3. Oh ! for the new heavens, and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness ! Grant me grace, O Lord, to purify myself even as Christ is pure, so that I may be meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

MEDITATION VII.

THE TEARS OF CHRIST.

TEXT.—John xi. 36 : Jesus wept.

MEMORY.—In none of the narratives of Our LORD'S Passion is it ever said that He wept. The occasions of His weeping were on His way to Lazarus' grave, and when He beheld the city and wept over it (Luke xix. 41).

UNDERSTANDING.—He is never said to have wept for His own sorrows. What moved him to tears was the sorrows and sins of others.

1. He wept to show His sympathy with two bereaved sisters.

Christ feels for us in our earthly losses, as well as in our spiritual trials.

2. He wept over the sin and perverseness of Jerusalem.—Can I, and do I, mourn over sin ? over the sin of others as well as my own ? Or is

it only the temporal losses of my friends which affect me, and can I see them sin without a pang ?

AFFECTIONS.—1. The Psalmist prays, “Put my tears into Thy Bottle.” How must the tears of Our Lord, the only pure, unselfish tears which man ever shed, have been treasured up in God’s lachrymatory ! O beautiful tears, so full of compassion and love ! O God, since Thy dear Son shed tears for the sins and sorrows of men, let me no longer be insensible to those sins and sorrows ! Touch my heart with sympathy for the afflicted, and with a wistful desire to pluck perishing souls as brands out of the burning.

2. God pardon the selfishness and worldliness of my grief ! When I am in trouble, how my mind turns always on the centre of self ! Oh that I might weep with them that weep, as Our Lord did !

3. Our Lord wept for the sins of the metropolis of His country. Do national sins ever stir my grief ? O Lord, enlarge this selfish heart, and give it higher and wider interests than those which it knows at present !

SOME of the views taken in the foregoing pages being sketched but briefly, and requiring a fuller development, I have thought it well to append two Sermons, on points of some importance. They are printed as they were preached.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.

A SERMON ON THE HOLY COMMUNION,

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF RUGBY SCHOOL,

Previously to a Confirmation.

"The Cup of Blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?"—
1 Cor. x. 16.

THE time appointed by our Bishop for the administration in this Chapel of the Rite of Confirmation, is now near at hand. It will be proper, therefore, that the Sermons which you hear from this place, while tending to the general edification of all, should at the same time bear some distinct reference to the circumstances of the Catechumens, who indeed constitute more than a fourth part of our entire community.

Of the several aspects under which Confirmation may be viewed, none perhaps is more important than that of admission to the Holy Communion

The Holy Communion, therefore, shall be our subject to-day.

The details of this grand and vast subject will be more properly given in private Catechetical Lectures. Suffice it, if I can on the present occasion put you into possession of the true idea of the Ordinance, and point out how our Communion Service embodies and carries out the idea. The true idea of any subject is like the keystone of an arch. Our mind, before it receives the true idea, is full of confused and floating notions which, although they may be elements of the Truth, we cannot reduce to any system, nor see how they hang together. But just as the keystone holds together the various stones of which the arch is composed, and is the means of combining them into one great whole, so every vague and floating notion falls into its place, when you have your true idea, and out of confusion is built up that order and harmony of views, which embraces within its wide range every element of Truth.

Now for the gaining of the true idea of this Ordinance, let us resort to the examination of the word employed to convey it. “The cup which we bless, is it not the *Communion*? The bread which we break, is it not the *Communion*? ” And in conformity with this language of Inspiration, we find, at the head of our Communion Office, a title to this effect: “The Order for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper, or Holy *Communion*. ”

Now, there you have the keystone, or fundamental idea, in that word “Communion.”

What then is the meaning of the word *Communion*? It means mutual participation, involving intercourse,—nothing more, and nothing less. If I address you, as I do now, without a reply on your part, or if you apply to me for some privilege which I have it in my power to bestow, that is not Communion, but only one-sided speech. If we take a meal, as Elijah did under the juniper-tree, in solitude and silence, that is not Communion, but a simple reception of food. But if two parties discuss a subject, and convey to one another the views which they respectively entertain, or if they sit down to a common entertainment, and partake of the same fare, that *is* Communion, the Communion of Conversation in the one case, the Communion of Festivity in the other. In either case there is a mutual participation. In the one the topic, in the other the viands, are the thing shared in common. And in either case there is mutual intercourse. Conversation is the intercourse of mind with mind, and conversation (proverbially) flows most easily over the festive board.

Now then what is the *Holy Communion*,—*the Communion*, specially and emphatically so called? What is the distinctive feature which characterizes it? In what consists its difference from the forms of earthly and social Communion, to which I have

adverted? In this principally; that the parties to the sharing, and the parties to the intercourse, are not merely man and his neighbour, but God and Man.

God and Man mutually partaking of that which is symbolized and conveyed by Bread and Wine—God in the plenitude of His Love, speaking to Man in accents of comfort over this Celestial Food: and Man, in return, addressing God in the loud accents of Eucharist (that is, of Praise and Thanksgiving)—that is *the Holy Communion*, that and nothing less, that and (for what can be more?) nothing more.

Now descend more minutely into the examination of the subject thus defined. *Mutual participation, involving mutual intercourse.*

Mutual participation. What is the thing, of which, in the Holy Communion, both God and Man jointly participate? Let the text answer—“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of *the Blood of Christ?* The bread which we break, is it not the communion of *the Body of Christ?*” The Body and Blood of Christ are the things partaken of by *both* parties. I say by *both* parties, God as well as Man;—hold fast that word *both*, and hold fast the idea that Communion is *mutual* participation, because this fences off at once a serious error. If you think of the Communion simply as a partaking on Man’s side, you will be liable to fall into the error that

the material Bread and Wine are the Body and Blood of Christ, and so to confuse, as the Papists do, the outward and visible sign of the Sacrament with its inward and spiritual Grace. But if you hold fast the definition of Communion which I have given you, I think you will be safe; because it must be abundantly clear to the commonest understanding, that God does *not* partake of the Bread and Wine, and therefore, if Communion be a *mutual* participation of God and Man, the Bread and Wine cannot be the subject, although they may be the sign and instrument (as indeed they are), of Communion; they cannot be *the Thing, of which both God and Man partake.*

Now what is meant by saying that both God and Man partake of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Communion? I will attempt to show you the real significance of this language, premising at the same time that the subject is an awfully mysterious one, and that all man's explanations thereof must be infinitely shallow, only just skimming the surface of the Truth.

You know that God is a Being of Infinite Holiness, Purity, and Justice, as well as of boundless Love. Now it is for the glory of these attributes that sinners should suffer the full penalty of their misdeeds, and that mankind should honour His Law by a strict observance of it. Does it not conduce to the honour of an earthly sovereign, that Justice shall be had upon all malefactors in

his realm, and that his subjects shall observe the laws which he has laid down? It conduces, then, to the Glory of God,—it *satisfies* (that is the word) God's Justice, and Purity, and Holiness,—that Sin, which is the violation of His Law, should meet with condign punishment, and that His Law should be respected and carried out by those to whom it was given. Now the Son of God took flesh and became a Representative Man, in order, first, that He might yield in His life a perfect obedience to the Law of God, and, secondly, that He might, “by His Agony and Bloody Sweat, by His Cross and Passion, and Precious Death,” endure that awful curse, which Man by sin had drawn down upon himself. In that Obedience, because it is perfect and spotless, in that Sacrifice, because it is infinite, in those Sufferings, because they, and they alone, are an adequate expiation, God finds infinite complacency. As a man's bodily wants are satisfied by nourishment, so God's claims of Justice are satisfied by the Atoning Work of His dear Son. And are not man's wants and necessities as much satisfied, as much consulted, by that work of Atonement and Mediation, as God's claims? Surely. Does man feel his burden of guilt to be very, very heavy, and crave after forgiveness, and yet feel that forgiveness cannot be, without something in the shape of satisfaction? Here is satisfaction to his heart's content,—the great Representative of the Human

Family, scourged, and buffeted, and spit upon, and hung in torture on the accursed Wood; oh, is it not enough, and more than enough, however deeply dyed thy stain, however aggravated thy falls? Or is he weak, and does he crave after sanctification and grace, and yet dread, all unworthy as he is, to ask so great a boon? Here is satisfaction for this craving also—the great Representative of the Human Family, a Divine Man, yielding in His life a perfect and sinless obedience to the entire Law:—is not this a claim of merit to all God's blessings, sufficient to ensure the success of a sincere application for them? If then in Christ's Work of Mediation and Atonement, all man's instinctive yearnings (after forgiveness, grace, peace, light, strength, acceptance, and so forth) find a perfect satisfaction, and if, in this same Work, God's claims of Justice, Holiness, and Purity, find a perfect satisfaction, I suppose we may say, that God and Man, in that precious Work, partake of a common Food,—that they are both satisfied by the Body and Blood of Christ,—understanding the Body and Blood of Christ, as a figurative expression for His Atoning and Mediating Work. *Is it not the Communion of the Atoning Work of Christ* (the Atonement having been wrought by the Victim's Death, that is, by the separation of the Body from the Blood, which is the life thereof)?

But now, how is all the above connected

specially and emphatically with the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper? In the following manner. The bloody sacrifices of the Old Law foreshadowed the Sufferings and Atonement of Christ, and on the ground of that foreshadowing were acceptable. When the victim was slain and burned, the offerer, if enlightened, found comfort in the thought that God would provide, in His own good time, a lamb for a Burnt Offering: he looked forward through the vista of years, or of centuries, with dim faith and mysterious yearning, to the Sacrifice of Calvary; and, on the other hand, God was reminded (we are warranted by the Scriptures in speaking of God after the manner of men) of that Atonement, which had been decreed in the counsels of Eternity, and in which alone His perfections can find complacency. The great Sacrament of the New Law is a solemn Commemoration *after the fact*—a mystical representation of the One Sacrifice to the eye of sense, to the eye of faith, and to the eye of God Most High. The Sacrifice is only One, and once for all, and can never, and will never, be repeated. But as among the mountains the crash of the falling avalanche, or the clang of the shepherd's horn, is reverberated from peak to peak, until the distant summit has caught and given back the sound, so the echoes of the great Sacrifice, and of that exceeding strong and bitter cry with which it was consummated, shall pass down the vista of ages from generation to

generation, till Time shall be no longer. And when two or three meet together in Christ's Name, and His Covenanted Presence, screened from the eye of sense, tabernacles among them, and when the Priest takes the Bread and breaks it with words of Blessing before God, and pours out the Wine into the Chalice, reciting in simple and solemn formula, how upon the Cross Christ "by the one oblation of Himself, once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world,"—hark!—it is an Echo from Calvary, which has come down to us along the Ages—an Echo, whose accents are of unspeakable consolation—as voiceful with Love and Grace in the Churches of the Nineteenth Century, as they were in the Upper Chambers and subterraneous Crypts of the First.

Let us turn now to the second part of the definition, and see how this mutual participation of God and Man involves mutual intercourse. Over this Sacred and Spiritual Banquet, then, God and Man address one another.

First, Man *prays*,—confesses his sins,—intercedes for the whole Catholic Society of which he is by Baptism a member. This Prayer is not Communion—simple prayer can never be—but it is involved in Communion, it is a fragment thereof. How sublime and yet how simple is the notion of Prayer as an address to God,—a drawing nigh to Him with the heart on the ground of

His Son's Work. The heart's desire poured out like water before the Lord,—all the cares, and sorrows, and sins, and yearnings, deposited in the Bosom of Infinite Love and Infinite Wisdom,—what a mighty privilege,—a privilege whose magnitude probably somewhat interferes with our just appreciation of it! How great a thing should we account it to be allowed to unlock our hearts to the wisest and holiest man upon Earth, in the assurance that he would throw all his wisdom and all his tenderness into the consideration of our case! How great a thing if we were allowed to do the same to one of those bright Angelic Beings, in whose heart the conversion of a sinner strikes the note of joy and high Thanksgiving! But all the sympathy and all the wisdom of Created Being, what is it to the reach of Infinite Intelligence, to the Heart of boundless Love, which is in God Most High? “Pour out your hearts at all times before Him, ye people; for God is our Hope.”¹

Secondly, it is involved in the idea of Communion that God shall address Man,—shall speak to him, by His Word read, by His Word preached, and by the still small voice of His Spirit in the conscience. This again is not Communion (for one-sided speech can never be so), but it is a fragment of Communion. God addressing Man

¹ Ps. lxii. 8.

out of His Word, by His Ministers, and through His Spirit, in accents of Love and Consolation,—stirring him with the promise of glorious meed,—kindling his gratitude by the message of forgiveness; kindling his love by a display to the soul of His own glorious Perfections; soothing him, like a weaned infant, with the whisper of peace,—this is the second element involved in the idea of Communion with God,—the second great element in the happiness of man, if man could but read that happiness aright.

Finally, these messages of comfort cannot but wake up from man's heart a second note to Godward—the note of thanksgiving in acknowledgment of God's Mercies, and praise in acknowledgment of His intrinsic Perfections. These are exercises higher than even Prayer, and which shall endure even when Prayer has passed away. For Prayer is the expression of need; and in a higher state of existence, where every tear shall be dried, and every yearning after happiness satisfied, Prayer, as having now no further occasion for its exercise, shall be merged in the burst of Praise,—in the ascription of Glory to God Most High.

Now from the above, if duly weighed, it will follow that a Communion Office (that is, a Form of Devotion for the Administration of the Lord's Supper) ought, in addition to the essential act of Communion, to embrace every exercise of Worship. Communion is mutual participation by God and

man in the Work of Christ. There must, therefore, be the recital over the Bread and Wine of the Sacrifice of Calvary, with its effects, and the participation of the Elements by the people, as the sign and instrument of their feeding mentally upon Christ's Atonement. That is the nucleus and basis of the whole grand Ceremony, around which every subordinate feature groups itself. But as Communion is a mutual participation *which involves mutual intercourse*, a Communion Office must also embrace every form of reciprocal address between man and God. As all the colours of the Rainbow, disparted among the various objects of Nature, blend and harmonize in the Sunbeam, so every branch of intercourse between man and God should find itself represented in the Office of the Holy Communion. And so it was in the old times, when by "The Liturgy" was meant *only* the office of the Eucharist, which indeed embraced and comprised all other offices, and of which all others were but detached fragments. So it is in our own Office of Communion. What branch of intercourse with God is omitted in it? There is Prayer, in all its forms—Confession of Sins—Supplication for the special blessings of the Ordinance—large Intercession for others—Self-dedication. There is Thanksgiving in the Post-Communion Prayers—Praise in its highest strain in the Seraphic Hymn, and in the Gloria in Excelsis. There is the read Word in the Epistles

and Gospels. And there is the preached Word in the Sermon, which, as has been correctly remarked, is in idea and theory, and ought to be in practice, part of the Office of the Communion; nor does our Church recognize a Sermon at any other time. The Lord's Message to the people, through His human ambassador, is clearly, however lightly some may think of it, a branch of Intercourse with God,—an Ordinance in which His Voice may be heard,—and so is justly embraceed in the Communion Service; nor (to be candid) do I know any other justification of tearing away the Sermon from the Communion Office (as we do in this Chapel),* than (the sufficient one, I think) that by putting it in its right place, we should be wearying the minds of very young people, and so defeating the object of all Religious Ordinances.

I conclude with one word to those, who are shortly to receive the Rite of Confirmation. How great a dignity, my Brethren, is ere long to be put upon you! You are to be admitted, if only the state of your hearts present no bar to so high a privilege, to the closest intercourse with God which it is possible to enjoy upon Earth—to the Ordinance of Ordinances, which embraces every other within its range. In what I have said, I have but expanded the thought thus simply ex-

* In Rugby School Chapel, it was customary to omit the Sermon in the Morning, and annex it to the Evening Service.

pressed by an old Father : "In Prayer, we speak to God; in Preaching, God speaks to us; but in the Sacred Supper, there is a mutual intercourse and a reciprocal approach." See that your preparation for such an Ordinance be not shallow nor cursory,—that by patient self-examination you bring to light and denounce war against every sin which lurks in the secret chambers of the heart,—that, in entire renunciation of all self righteousness, you throw yourself simply upon the Boundless Love of Christ for the forgiveness of past sins,—that every particle of resentment be ejected from the precinct of your hearts!

Then shall the Great Bridegroom of the soul initiate you, in that Ordinance, into the Mystery of His Redeeming Love. **HE SHALL BRING YOU INTO THE BANQUETING HOUSE, AND HIS BANNER OVER YOU SHALL BE LOVE.***

* Cant. ii. 4.

NOTE B.

A SERMON ON THE DIFFERENT METHOD OBSERVED
BY REVELATION, IN THE INFANCY AND Maturity
OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

GENESIS i, 3, pt. of 5, 14, 16, 19.

v. 3.

"God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

Part of v. 5.

"And the evening and the morning were the first day."

v. 14.

"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven,
to divide the day from the night."

v. 16.

"And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the
day, and the lesser light to rule the night:
We made the stars also."

v. 19.

"And the evening and the morning were the fourth day."

WE find from this Chapter that a certain order was observed in the process of Creation; an order resembling that which Art observes in imitating Nature's Works. A rough outline of the figure is first sketched or moulded by the painter or statuary; and, this having been done, he afterwards proceeds to discriminate feature, to develop

particular expression, and to finish the details of the work. Something similar is observable in the works of the first Great Artificer. Land and water are first created under the name of Earth, in a state of fusion and combination. This was the substratum or rudimentary basis of the Planet. Afterwards, and not until the third day of Creation, a decree is issued, in virtue of which the land and water (heretofore a heterogeneous mixture) are separated, and become distinct. The waters, under the Divine fiat, coalesce into the great receptacles of seas and rivers—the shore line of continent and island, so beautifully diversified in many parts of the world by creeks and promontories, is seen gradually forming itself, and constituting the boundary of terra firma.

So with the arrangements for illuminating the Globe. Light is first formed, and diffused apparently throughout the Universe. This took place on the first day. On the fourth day, a decree goes out for the creation of those heavenly Bodies, which were thenceforth to be receptacles and fountains of light. These orbs having been formed, the streams of light collected themselves into the sun and fixed stars—they flowed back from all quarters of the Universe into their appointed channels, and thence have issued forth ever since. You are to observe then, that the element itself, Light, is independent of the receptacle by which it is now ministered to us. The element was in

existence before the receptacle,—the connexion of Light with the Sun was an arrangement made subsequently to the creation of Light.*

Now there is an analogy, continually recognized in Scripture, between the natural and the spiritual Creations—an analogy, which is the foundation of Parable. It is not merely the fancy, which recognizes a similitude between the soil and the human heart, between the seed and the Word of God, between the Son of Man and the sower. The connexion between the two subjects is founded in truth and reality, and is to be explained by the very simple and easy principle, that the God of Nature is the God of Grace also, and that, He being always “the same, yesterday and to-day and for ever,” must observe, in all departments of His operation, the same order and method of working. So that to the analogies between Nature and Grace we may apply the words, which Lord Bacon uses, after commenting upon the analogies which subsist between different departments of Nature, “Which things are not merely similitudes, as men of narrow observation might conceive them to be, but the same footsteps of Nature” (I would rather say, the same footsteps of God), “treading or printing on several subjects or matters.”

* It would be out of place here to enter into scientific difficulties. I take the whole of the Mosaic narrative to speak of phenomena, not to describe scientific truths, and, our object being Edification, we speak accordingly.

This remark will admit of application to the Light of Revelation—an application which I now proceed to make.

I need not tell you that Man is by nature walking in utter mental darkness,—darkness as to his destiny, darkness as to his duties, darkness as to his dangers, and darkness, above all, as to the method in which he must be saved. A Revelation upon these points must be made to him by God, if his feet are to be set upon the way that leadeth unto life. And I ask you, by the way, to endeavour to realize to your minds for a moment man's need of Revelation in his natural state. That need is represented by imagining men in a state of natural darkness, unrelieved save by a few twinkling stars. Let the faint and feeble ray of these stars represent all the aid which man can get from what is proudly called the Moral Sense—i. e. his innate notions of right and wrong. Can you see objects by starlight in their true colours? Can you avoid pitfalls, and marshes, and stumbling-blocks by starlight? Can you do any work effectually by starlight? or is it not rather true that we must work while we have sunlight, and that, when the night cometh, no man can work? Well, in a similar manner, we see not good and evil in their true colours, we are ignorant of the tremendous danger of sinful courses, ignorant of the traps which Satan sets in our way, ignorant of how to serve God properly and as He would be

served, without instruction from above on these and similar points. We must have Light; and this Light is called Revelation; the Revelation under which we live (or Christian Revelation) being the clearest and best ever yet vouchsafed to the world.

Now in quite the early days of Christianity, before yet the Church had taken shape or form—while yet the new System was in a state of fusion—the streams of Revelation were shed abroad promiscuously, without, it would appear, any regular channels or receptacles. The Promise was—“And it shall come to pass in the last days (saith God), I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out, in those days, of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.”* The nearest definition of the word *prophesy* in this passage I take to be—shall preach, or utter Religious Truth (not, as modern preachers do, after, and as the result of, study of God’s Word, but) under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And accordingly we find this to have been the case. In the infancy of the Christian Church, the promise was fulfilled to the letter. The gift of prophesying was diffused

* Acts ii. 17, 18.

far and wide. There is no trace of its having been confined to regular Church Officers ; as the wind bloweth where it listed, so the Holy Spirit, by way of showing His entire freedom and independence of agency, visited with His miraculous influences whom He would, bond or free, male or female. The daughters of St. Philip the Deacon were virgins who did prophesy,—Priscilla joined with Aquila in expounding to Apollos the way of God more perfectly. Possibly (for it would be quite in accordance with all we hear), Onesimus, the fugitive slave, may have prophesied, after Paul admitted him into the Church by Baptism, and had laid his hands upon him. In the very words which he employs in speaking of the subject, St. Paul recognizes the possibility of all the members of a congregation being qualified to prophesy : “If therefore the whole Church be come together into one place, *and all prophesy,*”* —a mode of speaking which proves that the gift must have been at that time unconfined, and universally extended to all Christians, without regard of sex, rank, or office.

Such was the Church in its state of fusion, when its rudiments were all mixed up together in a chaotic form,—when the Light had just sprung forth from the bosom of darkness, and had shed itself abroad in unrestrained luxuriance

* 1 Cor. xiv. 23.

through the spiritual world. And the gross and grievous mistake of certain Christian sects in our own day, of the Quakers, for example, and the followers of Mr. Edward Irving, is just this, that they cannot see that a state of things natural and appropriate in the period of fusion, is highly unnatural and inappropriate in the period of crystallization. Their model Church is a Church new-born, just awakening to the consciousness of its powers,—a Church having life indeed (the organizing principle) within it, but lacking system or organization of any regular kind.

But wait a moment, and you will see System emerging out of the Chaos. You will find an actual prohibition laid by an Apostle upon the ministration of females. For so it is written—"Let your women keep silence in the Churches, for it is not permitted to them to speak, but they are commanded to be under subjection." "It is a shame for a woman to speak in the Church." It is but another step in conformity with the same principle, to shut up the power of ministering in the Congregation, as it is now most wisely shut up, to those who by laying on of hands are solemnly set apart to the Sacred Function.

My present business, however, is not with the Ministry of the Church, but with a subject even more important—the Light of Revelation. And I call upon you to observe that this Light has observed the same process as natural Light,—that

from being spread abroad over the surface of the moral world, it has now coalesced into a Book, and from that Book, as the Centre and Medium of all Spiritual Light, has Revelation emanated ever since. The Bible is now the Orb of the Sun, which ministers Light, and in the absence or withdrawal of the Bible, there is no Light. Men and women inspired unto infallibility exist no longer. It was appropriate that they should exist in the Church's state of fusion, but some organ of Revelation more stable, more permanent, less liable to pass away, was needed for her state of crystallization. We have that Organ in the Volume of the Old and New Testament.

Now I am most anxious to impress upon you this standing and position of the Bible in the Scheme of Grace, because there are so many insidious methods, now in vogue, of sapping the faith of young men in that most precious and glorious Volume. And among those methods, none is more artful or more deadly in its effect than that which represents the Bible itself as saying little about the Bible. Whence the enormous importance which you attach to these Sacred Books, cries the Romanist on one hand, and the Rationalist on the other, when Scripture itself dwells but rarely on its own paramount claims ; nay, never directly and explicitly unfolds those claims except in that one passage, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable

for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"? *

Part of this cry is a directly false assertion, having nothing but its own impudence and bare-facedness to conciliate belief. Part of it does raise a difficulty, which a little thought on the real relation of the Bible to the Church of God soon serves to solve. As regards the Old Testament, it is simply untrue that its paramount claims are never or rarely recognized in the Volume of Scripture. Our Lord and His Holy Apostles make it the constant standard of appeal in all matters of Doctrine, always assuming that the *Ipse dixit* of the Law or the Prophets is quite enough to set every question at rest; and the Prophet David, one of the most eminent of God's saints and servants, seems, if we may credit his own expressions in the Psalms, to have subsisted spiritually upon that portion of the Word of God which alone was extant in his time. Witness such words as these: "O how I love Thy law: all the day long is my study in it." "Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors." "Thy word is a lantern unto my feet and a light unto my paths." "The words of the Lord are pure words; even as the silver tried in the furnace of the earth, purified seven times." "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the Law of the

* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

Lord, and in His Law will he meditate day and night." As regards the Scriptures of the New Testament, it is true that *comparatively little* is said by them of themselves. And why so? Why, but because the Christian Scriptures were hardly yet in existence; because it was God's plan in the beginning to instruct His Church by living Inspired Men—a plan adapted to the infancy of the Church—but that gradually, on the dying off of these Inspired Men, His plan was changed? Inspiration did not indeed cease to speak, but gathered itself up into a Code of written Documents,—Documents which men were instigated to write, not by the promptings of their own mind;—nay, but "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."*

In conclusion, I will a little further develop this Image of Natural Light, as emblematising, and supplying an analogy to, the Light of Revelation.

Natural Light then comes to us through a medium. God uses the vehicle of the Sun to convey it to our eyes. It may come to us under certain circumstances through a second medium, as when we are in a building with stained glass windows, and the Sunlight coming to us through the glass, takes divers hues from the substance through which it passes.

* 2 Pet. i. 21.

God is the Author and Source of Inspiration, but man is the medium through which it is conveyed to us. The Gospel was not preached to mankind by a voice from Heaven, but men of like passions with ourselves were inspired to declare it. Nor did Inspiration do away with the natural character of its organs, so as to make them simply mouthpieces. We cannot help recognizing a difference of style, founded of course in difference of character, between St. Paul and St. John. The diversity of human character thus indicated confirms the one Truth, to which they both testify, and serves to illustrate it further.

Nay, more than this. Divine Truth, though one glorious whole, is like a cube,—it has different surfaces, each of which may be surveyed consecutively, until we have gone round about it and apprehended it in its integrity. Now each Sacred Writer gives us a different aspect of One and the Same Divine Truth. St. Mark presents Christ to us on the side of His Human Nature ; St. John on the side of His Eternal Preöxistence ; St. Luke in His Sacrificial character as the Victim ; St. Matthew in His Regal character as the King. It is one and the same Christ presented to us by all, only under different aspects,—One and the same realized Ideal of Humanity, presented to us in successive views, that we may apprehend it with greater facility.

So I have seen the sun's glorious ray, which, in

its unshorn and untempered splendour, would have dazzled the naked eye, analyzed by the student into its component elements, and gazed upon with pleasure, when separated into its distinct parts. So have I seen the gaudy light of mid-day pouring its full splendours through the windows of some venerable Cathedral, and casting upon the ground their rich blazonry of crimson and indigo, while the motes danced in the streams of coloured light.

My Brethren, let no perverse reasonings undermine your faith in God's Inspired Word. It is the Receptacle and Vehicle of Inspiration—regard it as such. Let not a day pass without bringing your mind into contact with its Light. Try to view all subjects in the light which it sheds upon them, so that you may see both sin and Christ, both your danger and your refuge, even as God sees them. Remember that the suggestions which are made in the Bible, though they come to us through human organs, did not emanate originally from the human mind. The Spirit, when He moved the holy men to write, had a perfect foresight of your circumstances, your position, your necessities, your trials. Here then—somewhere in this voiceful Book—is a message for you, a message designed and constructed to meet your case. Take heed unto what is written, that such message may find thee out, and penetrate into the depths of thy conscience. And when it has found thee out, walk in the light, lest it only serve to

condemn thee. Avoid the sin,—the precipice which it shows yawning at thy feet. Seek to turn into practice the duties which it reveals. Comfort thyself by the promises of Holy Scripture. Strengthen thyself by the hopes which it holds out. So shall God's Light and Truth lead thee, and bring thee to His Holy Hill and to His Dwelling.

THE END.

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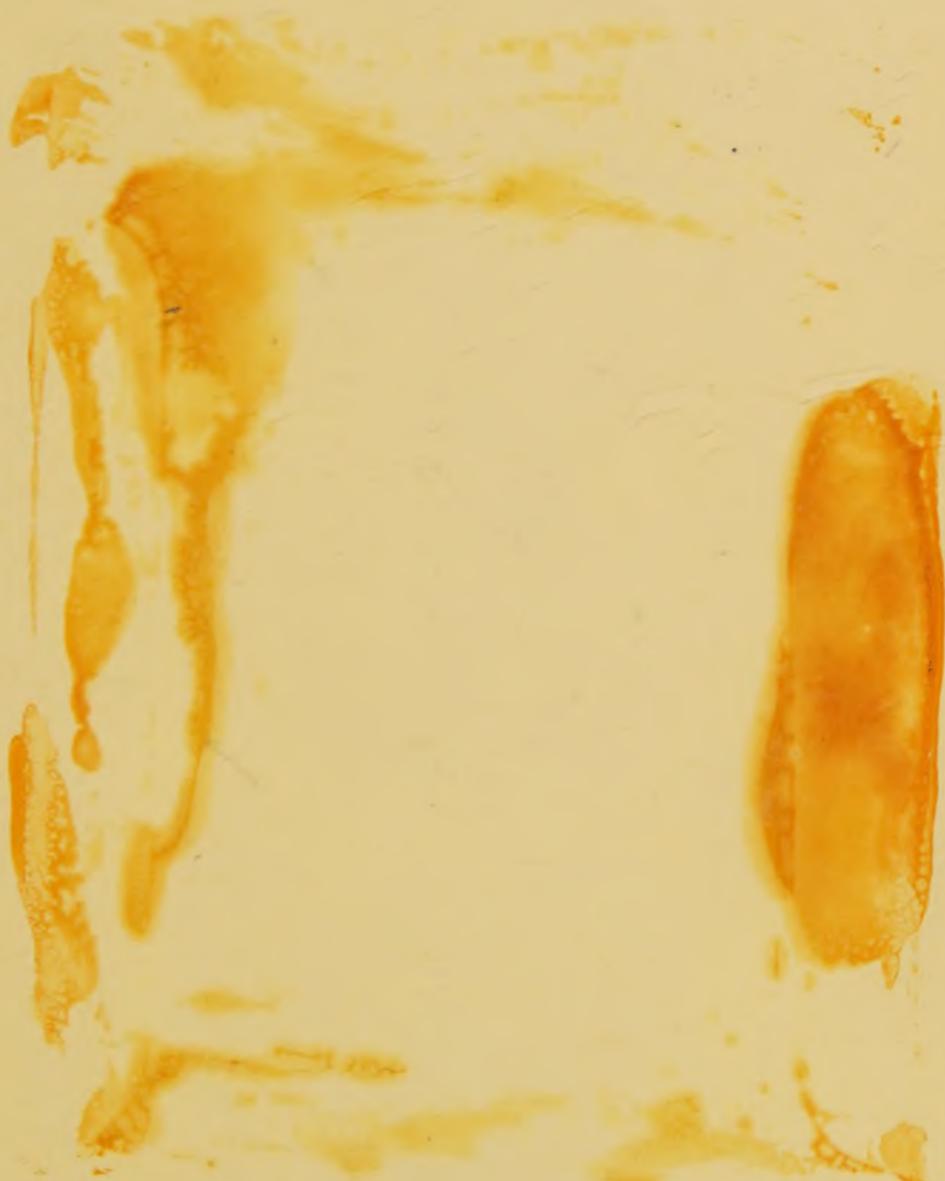
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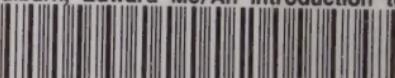


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